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**CHILD -MEANINGFUL LEARNING IN TWO NURSERY
SETTINGS**

by

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Submitted for the degree of MPhil

**Centre for Sociology and Social Research at the Open
University**

February 1998

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the nature of the provision for a group of bilingual Asian children on entry to and during their time in two nursery settings in a town in the South Midlands. The research explores two themes. The first is the degree to which, in the context of early years practice, the curriculum in each setting provided relevant and developmental experiences for their bilingual children. The second is the extent of the knowledge and understanding amongst educators of issues related to planning for cultural and language diversity in their schools. The study included interviews with educators and parents as well as observations in the classroom.

Chapter One sets out the origins of the research, my reasons for embarking on it and its significance in relation to other research in this field. Chapter Two discusses the ethnographic methodology employed in the research, and how the study was established and conducted. Chapter Three examines the theoretical standpoint on which the dissertation is based, including theories of play, cultural and language diversity, and collaborative teaching and learning. Chapter Four examines the parents' views and experiences in relation to their informal education of their children at home, and the cultural tensions arising from their and their children's engagement with the nurseries. By means of interviews with educators and observations in the classroom Chapter Five provides a critique of the educators' policies, views and practices in relation to their provision for their bilingual learners. Chapter 6 summarises the findings of the research in relation to early years practice, provision for cultural and language diversity, and parental involvement in the settings. As a result recommendations for developments in policy and practice are made to the schools. Chapter Six also examines the discussions which took place with the schools as a result of those recommendations.

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Chapter 1: Child-Meaningful Learning in Two Nursery Settings: An introduction to the Research.

The Study.

This study was carried out between October 1994 and December 1996 in a Nursery School and the Nursery Unit of a Lower School, both situated in a town in the South Midlands. Both settings admitted children at three years old until the end of the term during which they reached their fifth birthdays. Both settings had a substantial number of children from their local communities who entered the nurseries with English as an additional language and whom I will refer to as being bilingual (see Chapter 3 for an explanation of this term). It was a group of these children who were studied, some of whom had already spent the first months of their attendance in the settings. I had hoped to study each child in the group on their first entry to the nursery but this was not possible in all cases (see Chapter 2). The children studied were representative of the different Asian communities in the two schools, including those whose families were originally from Bangladesh, India or Pakistan.

My aims in carrying out the research were:

- To examine the provision for bilingual children on their entry into the nursery setting and to study how that provision related to their biculturalism.
- To examine levels of awareness in policy and practice of cultural and linguistic diversity in planning for bilingual children during their time in the nurseries.
- To consider to what extent policy and practice within the nursery settings provided opportunities to establish multiculturalism within their early years curriculum.

The Origins of the Study.

The study formed part of a wider piece of research at the Lower School taking place at the Open University, under the directorship of Professor Peter Woods, entitled "Child

Meaningful Learning in a Bilingual School". As part of this research a Research Fellow from the University carried out a study in the Reception/Year 1 and Year 2 classes of the school. The origins of my own study arose from my time as a headteacher of a Lower School in the same town as the two nursery settings. I had approached Professor Woods at the Open University to enquire about the possibility of a collaborative piece of research examining provision for the bilingual learners in my school of which there were a substantial majority. Unfortunately, before the research began in the school I was forced to take early retirement due to ill health, as a result of which it was no longer possible to continue the research. However, the research was able to continue in an alternative Lower School after approaches had been made to the headteacher. At the same time I registered for a higher degree at the University giving me an opportunity of pursuing the aims and interests which had led me to contact the Open University originally.

My Reasons for Carrying Out the Study.

My interest in the opportunity to research provision for bilingual learners arose in the first instance from my personal experience as a teacher in a variety of inner-city Primary Schools and as a headteacher of a bilingual school. This experience also included a year as a Section XI support teacher. I had for several years been concerned, both from an educational and political point of view, about the early experiences of ethnic minority children within the school system. It appeared from my own past experience that children from these backgrounds were expected to adjust to school in such a way that their cultural and linguistic knowledge represented ultimately, not an opportunity for an enrichment of the curriculum and the culture of the schools, but a hurdle to be overcome in the process of which the children would adapt to the educational and cultural norms of the schools. In this context there were pressures on bilingual children to become proficient users of English as a predominant source of linguistic interaction in the process of which they experienced a downgrading of their own community languages. It appeared to me that, in practice, this represented the ultimate aim of the schools,

either intentionally or through omission, despite the often genuine attempts by educators to recognise the children's cultures, by means of artefacts, displays, assemblies and the celebration of festivals. What was lacking was the consistent establishment of learning environments which recognised cultural diversity as a source of enrichment for the curriculum. As a headteacher of a bilingual school, the development of a curriculum which celebrated cultural and language diversity represented for me an important aspect of the school's development. My reason for approaching the Open University for the intended research was that I knew the University had already carried out some research in the matter (for example, Grugeon and Woods, 1990; OU In-service pack: P534 Every Child's Language, 1985). I also considered it would possess the expertise to support an investigation into present and potential practice in the school. I felt as an educator that I had identified a problem but we as a school needed assistance in finding effective solutions and ways forward in the areas of developing a curriculum which was relevant to our bilingual learners while at the same time retaining a belief in a 'child-centred' approach to education. This approach, I believed, should be based on providing bilingual learners with a sense of ownership and personal control over their activities, thus enabling them to use and implement their cultural and linguistic knowledge.

These particular approaches to the curriculum had arisen from my experiences as a teacher who had specialised in early years education in Infant Schools or Infant Departments in Primary Schools. I had worked with bilingual children from their entry to school but I was also aware that the process of induction into the educational system, reflecting the mores and attitudes predominant in society, had begun in the nurseries either attached to or feeding into some of the schools in which I worked. As an early years teacher I had also been interested in the possibilities which early years theory and practice, built around concepts of play, possessed for the development of a curriculum which would have relevance for bilingual learners. In addition, on my retirement I was invited by the headteachers of two Nursery Schools in the town to join their governing bodies. Both these nurseries possessed substantial proportions of bilingual children and

one of those schools provided the joint subject of this study. This practical involvement in the work of nursery settings gave me an opportunity to explore some of the issues relating to early years provision which interested me and which I have been able to pursue as a result of my research with the Open University.

The Significance of my Study.

The political significance.

Questions of cultural and language diversity have existed as important social and educational issues for several years as Britain has continued to develop as a multi ethnic society. Such an issue has taken on such importance as a result of the discrimination and racism which ethnic minorities have consistently experienced over the years resulting in the passing of the Race Relations Act (1976) which set out to make acts of racism illegal. The Commission for Racial Equality was subsequently established in order to enforce the terms of the Act. The Children Act (1989) made reference also to the need for racial equality in the treatment of children. The debate around the issue of discrimination and racism in schools has also entered the public domain. The Rampton Report (1981) which investigated the underachievement of African Caribbean children in British schools emphasised the need within the work of schools for a recognition of the cultural diversity of its pupils:

A 'good' education cannot be based on one culture only, and in Britain where ethnic minorities form a permanent and integral part of the population, we do not believe that education should seek to iron out the differences between cultures, nor attempt to draw everyone into the dominant culture. On the contrary, it will draw upon the experiences of the many cultures that make up our society and thus broaden the cultural horizons of every child (quoted in Epstein, 1993, p.20).

The report of the Swann Committee (Education for All. The Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, 1985)

emphasised also the need for a recognition of the diversity of cultures which children bring to their schools:

We believe that schools...have a responsibility, within the tradition of a flexible and child-oriented education system, to meet the individual educational needs of all pupils in a positive and supportive manner, and this would include catering for any particular educational needs which an ethnic minority pupil may have, arising for example from his or her linguistic or cultural background (p. 317).

The treatment of cultural and language diversity within schools, however, still remains an issue. The explicit reference in the National Curriculum to the teaching of "standard English" (DFE, 1995) has created a potential situation where teachers could be placed under pressure, as a result of educational and assessment demands, to sideline community languages and cultures. The consequences for ethnic minority children, including those with English as an additional language, could be seen to be that the very essence of their knowledge and understanding of their world encapsulated in their cultures and languages are treated as something which has a limited validity compared with the particular Anglicised culture and language models so often represented in schools. This lack of recognition in schools results not only in a diminution of the cultural enrichment of our society, but also in a loss of what has been argued as the potential for bilingual children to possess a positive self-image (Siraj-Blatchford, 1994, p.46).

The significance of play

The combination of an investigation of early years practice and its relevance for the bilingual learner as she experiences the nursery, has meant that this study has provided a particular insight into the provision for young bilingual learners. There have been a number of studies in recent years examining children's experiences of learning in nurseries and other early years settings (for example, Athey, 1990; Gura, 1992; Hutt et al, 1989; Nutbrown, 1994; Pascal, 1990). The common theme running through these

and other studies is their examination of the methodology of play and their emphasis on its pivotal role in the learning experiences of young children (for example Bruce, 1987, 1991; Moyles, 1989, (ed) 1994; David, 1990, 1996). In common with a number of these studies Hutt et al, (1989) considered early years educators needed to move beyond the unqualified Piagetian model of play, endorsed by the Plowden Report (1967), whereby children were given the uninterrupted freedom to explore and experiment with activities provided by educators in early years settings. They stressed, by means of their identification of different forms of play, the need for an implicit or 'transparent' structure within early years settings in which educators take a much more interactionist role with children in their play and where there is a "greater degree of planning in provision in terms of materials, of staff roles and of time" (1989, p.230). In Chapter 3, in which I describe in greater depth the theoretical standpoint on which this dissertation is based, I will examine the different emphases which contemporary early years theoreticians have given to the relationship between the need for child/adult interaction during play and the extent to which this should form part of a more structured or 'opaque' (ibid, p.230) form of curriculum in early years settings. Two further studies have added significantly to an understanding of play. Athey (1990) in her research in collaboration with professionals, parents and students over a two year period examined the way that observations of children's patterns of behaviour, or schemas, during their play added to the educator's knowledge of the individual child and her learning (see also Nutbrown, 1994; Meade with Cubey, 1995). In addition, the research carried out by the Froebel Blockplay Research Group under the direction of Tina Bruce (Gura, 1992) provided important insights into the way in which young children's play with blocks can reveal extensive understandings of two and three dimensional space and the solving of scientific and mathematical problems as well as providing a non-verbal means of expression and communication.

The importance of play as a means of early learning for bilingual children has been consistently emphasised in contemporary research and methods of providing for those children have been outlined (for example, Bruce, 1987; Siraj-Blatchford, 1994; David,

1990). The particular contribution which my study makes to this debate is to examine the issue of models of play as instruments of teaching and learning and their specific relevance to young bilingual learners within nursery settings.

The significance of provision for cultural and language diversity.

Of importance in such a study are issues arising from the role of culture and language in the teaching and learning process. In addition to stressing the importance of giving status to cultural diversity in schools, all the studies mentioned above have emphasised the importance of learning as both an individual and social process reliant upon systematic interaction between adult and child, whether parents (Tizard and Hughes, 1984) and other family members (Dunn, 1988), or in the company of other adults in which the development of knowledge and understanding arises from the shared meanings constructed out of collaboration and negotiation between adult and child (Wells, 1987; Edwards and Mercer, 1987; Mercer, 1995). In addition, researchers have consistently stressed the importance of encouraging children's community languages in early years settings both amongst each other and with adults (for example, Siraj-Blatchford, 1994, 1996; Mills and Mills, 1993; Epstein, 1993). As a result of the Bradford Project (1979, in Siraj-Blatchford, 1996; in Gardner, 1991) and later the Calderdale Report (1986, in *ibid*, 1991), community languages have also been viewed not only as a way of establishing self-confidence and self-esteem amongst bilingual learners but also as important vehicles for the development of English and a knowledge about language (Wiles, 1985; David, 1990; Siraj-Blatchford, 1994). My study contributes to this debate by exploring the relationship between play in nursery settings and the opportunities it provides for the development of language and cultural awareness in the early stages of the bilingual child's experience of school. In this connection both Minns (1988) and Gregory (1992, 1995) have described their researches into the experiences of bilingual children in the reading process. However, these studies have concentrated on children in the primary school system whereas my study is concerned with children's earliest social and language experiences in the

nursery, examining in particular their experiences of home and school and their early interactions with the world represented by the nursery. The experiences of transition to new school cultures and experiences have already been described in the work of Grugeon and Woods (1990) and Gregory and Biarnes (1994). However, their studies describe bilingual children's experiences on transition from home into reception classes and in the case of Grugeon and Woods into other stages of the educational process. My study has been particularly concerned with examining the way in which bilingual children respond to the move from home to nursery and whether this new setting as a foundation for their future school careers encourages or infringes negatively on their cultures and languages.

The significance of parental knowledge.

An important source of the development of young children's learning arises from their relationships with adults, especially their own parents or nursery educators. I will use the term educator in the study to refer to all those who educate and care for the children in the nursery setting (see also Siraj-Blatchford, 1992, p.104). Critical early developmental experiences occur within the children's familial and community environments. The importance of these experiences and the value for educators of parents' particular knowledge of their children has been stressed in a number of works, either through direct parental participation in research (Athey, 1990) or indirectly by means of an emphasis on the importance in early years settings of partnerships between schools and parents. This has included a stress being put on the need not only to encourage parental involvement in schools (for example, Torkington, 1986; Little and Meighan, 1995; Siraj-Blatchford, 1994) but also for schools to recognise the contribution which parents, families and their communities make to their children's development and understanding whether they are bilingual or not (for example Tizard and Hughes, 1984; Minns, 1990). What my study has set out to add to this body of research is to give bilingual parents a specific "voice" of their own in the context of their children's early experiences of their school careers. The pictures which they give of

their children at home and the expressions of their own educational and cultural concerns provide evidence not only of the extent of their contribution towards their children's development but also the need for educators to be aware of this cultural and linguistic contribution as the children enter nursery for the first time. In this way parents become an integral source of the building of knowledge and understanding of children in the school setting.

The interviews with the parents revealed a marked tension for them between the need to engage with the culture of the nurseries and their desire for their children to retain their community and familial cultures and languages. This tension emphasised the central role played by educators in the development of a relevant curriculum for bilingual children within their settings. Several studies (for example, Nias, 1989) have emphasised the contemporary pressures which have been brought to bear on teachers as a result of a series of statutory measures beginning with the Education Reform Act of 1988. However, some teachers have found ways of reasserting their expertise and creativity (for example, Woods, 1995; Woods and Jeffrey, 1996). In relating my interviews with educators and my observations of them and the children to what the parents were saying my study has placed teachers' lives and their practices within the context of the communities which they serve. In this way the teachers' policies and practices are placed clearly within the context of provision for their bilingual learners.

My Personal Development as a result of the Study.

Nias (1989) describes how teachers as they enter the world of work bring with them a set of values representing what she calls the individual's "substantial self" (p.21), deeply felt ideas about their world and its meaning, developed over a period of time and influenced by their own backgrounds and experiences. She emphasises the construction of the self as being central to the way in which the individual builds a view of her world both socially and professionally. This idea is relevant in my study particularly to the ways in which the educators and parents described their ideas and beliefs as well as their lives. This notion of the establishment of the self applies in its turn to the

researcher who, like the parents and educators, possesses views and beliefs which represent part of the researcher's own "architecture of self" (Pinar, 1986, quoted in Woods, 1995, p.138). In this way the researcher approaches the research, not as a neutral observer, although an open mind is a necessity, but as someone who believes in development and improvement in her or his chosen field of research. In this sense my research possessed two purposes, as Woods suggests:

The twin thrust here is research as demystification and research as promotion. The first helps to clarify areas of past concern that still concern one...the second to advance the things one believes in - perhaps educational improvement, equal opportunities, democratic processes, community living (1992, p.52).

I described earlier how, as a practising teacher, I had been concerned about the provision for bilingual learners within the educational system, especially in early years education. My own "substantial self" invested my desire to pursue this line of research, and to seek more convincing evidence than was currently available. In addition, I had no knowledge of the views and attitudes of the Asian communities towards what I believed was, generally, a lack of appropriate provision for their children in school. It was in this light that I personally, as a researcher, approached the issues raised by the study.

My discussions with the parents provided me with the beginnings of a knowledge, within the attendant limitations of my own cultural experiences, of what it means to be a member of an ethnic minority group in our society, and the tensions which bilingual parents experience in relation to the education of their children. My interviews and discussions with educators as well as my reading concerned with teachers' lives provided me with new understandings of the way educators approach their work. This provided me with new insights into the experience of being a teacher as well as a person. By means of the educator interviews, my own reading and my observations of educators and children I was able to acquire a greater understanding of the way in which young children learn and the positive effects of being bilingual as part of this

process. In this way the different strands of the research and the methods used in the study enabled me not only to develop my understanding as a researcher of important educational issues but also enabled me to experience the positive insights provided by the use of an ethnographic approach to research. I will expand on these personal gains in the concluding chapter of this study. In the next chapter I consider the methods used in the study in more detail.

Chapter 2: Interviews and Observations: The Methodology of Research in the Two Nursery Settings.

Qualitative Methods Employed In the Research.

The research consisted of a combination of interviews with parents and educators and observations of children and educators in the classrooms. The reasons for including interviews in the research arose out of a desire to examine, in the first instance, the parents' own ideas about their children and their wider views concerning education, culture and language. Similarly, the interviews with educators were used to examine their educational ideas. The information collected from these interviews provided a greater understanding of the relationship between parental aspiration and educational provision for the bilingual learners in the nurseries.

The interviews were designed to be largely informal, in keeping with qualitative methods of data collection which I favoured in the research. Qualitative methods are aimed at discovering the reasons behind the data, exemplified by the motivations and views which have developed within that context. Eisner emphasises this approach:

...My uneasiness with conventional approaches to evaluation is that they focus almost exclusively on the products of the enterprise (a narrow slice at that) while they neglect the conditions, context, and interactions that led to these consequences...Essentially, my concern is a desire to form a conception of mind, to create an image of a person and to learn how that person comes to know (1985, p.148).

This view is central to a qualitative method of research and echoes the notion of this mode of data collection as providing a "language for speaking about that which is not normally spoken about" (Hargreaves, 1978, quoted in Nias, 1991, p.163). The method used in this is by means of an ethnographic approach (Woods, 1992) consisting of

interviews and, where appropriate, observations over a period of time which aim to build an instructive picture of the individuals being studied.

Interviewing is an important aspect of the qualitative method of research. The choice of an unstructured or conversational interview as opposed to one that is structured is made in order to satisfy the desire to place the data collected from interviewees within the context of the social and personal backgrounds underlying their views (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989, p.85). The structured interview, based generally on a set of pre-conceived questions, is designed to elicit specific information and data from the interviewee. What it fails to do is to “engage with the texture of people’s lives” (Burgess, 1988, p.153). Burgess emphasises the importance of the unstructured type of interview:

If we are to comprehend the lives of those people who are studied in educational ethnography, it is essential that we consider how to conduct conversations with a purpose. The result will mean that rather than having the sanitized interview of the textbook writer, we shall have a series of conversations that will act as the essential catalyst to further our understanding of teachers’ lives (1988, p.153).

There are two further ways in which the unstructured interview acts as an ethnographic method of data collection. Firstly, its substantial lack of structure means that potentially there is a greater level of negotiation between the interviewer and interviewee as ideas are explored by both participants (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989, p.86). Secondly, this type of interview possesses the potential for being a learning process for the interviewee who in effect is being invited to reflect on herself and her ideas, rehearsing them for the interviewer (Woods, 1993, p.160; Simons, 1981, p.33).

The Setting Up of the Research.

The schools used in the research.

Previous research had been conducted at Westside Lower School and I knew the headteacher, Chris, personally from my own time as a teacher in the authority. The school had also been supportive of and shown an enthusiasm for research previously conducted there. My knowledge of Bridge Nursery School was drawn, firstly, as with Westside, from my experience as a teacher in the authority and, secondly, later on when I became a governor at the school before the beginning of the research. I also knew that the headteacher, Rosalind, was personally interested in educational research into early years practice.

In addition, both schools had a significant number of children who were entering the nurseries with English as an additional language and it was felt that the settings fulfilled the criteria of the research for an investigation into child meaningful learning for that kind of pupil. I decided to include Bridge Nursery School in addition to Westside because I considered that a comparison between two settings was necessary because both nurseries acted as feeders to Lower Schools, but in different ways. The nursery at Westside was a department of the Lower School and acted as a feeder to the school's reception class. Bridge, on the other hand, because it was a local authority Nursery School in its own right, did not have a specific catchment area and as such was able to feed into a number of Lower Schools. In this way there was potential for comparison between the two settings with regard to issues of autonomy and curriculum provision arising from their relationships with their respective feeder schools or classes.

My previous knowledge of Bridge Nursery School and the fact that I knew Chris and Rosalind represented a distinct advantage for me as a researcher in that I was not required to begin a process of establishing and building relationships with the headteachers of both schools. Also, my work as a governor at Bridge meant that in addition to knowing the staff I was viewed as already having a role to play in the

school. This role was directly related to supporting policy and practice and in this way I already possessed a knowledge of the school's pedagogy. This meant that my research and its findings possessed a practical function related to developing strategies for school improvement in the context of my particular relationship with the setting.

The initial setting up of the research: gatekeepers and agents.

My first approaches to the schools were by means of a personal discussion with the two headteachers setting out the basis of the research in general and exploring the possibilities of using the schools for that purpose. Having established their willingness to take part in the research I then arranged for Peter Woods and myself to visit both schools in order to discuss the research further with Chris and Rosalind. These meetings consisted of a more detailed examination of the research itself and gave both headteachers an opportunity to ask any questions. At this stage I had further meetings with Chris and Rosalind to discuss how I was going to introduce and explain the research to the relevant members of staff.

Although the headteachers provided the first stage of access to the schools our mutual acquaintance meant a substantial modification to their roles as gatekeepers to the settings. Although they acted as gatekeepers in giving permission for access to their settings (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p.63), they did not set limitations on the areas which I wanted to research (ibid p.66; Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989, p.60). Instead they acted as my agents, using their role as headteachers and their knowledge of their schools to enable me to gain access to the next strata of management represented by Jenni, the co-ordinator of the nursery unit at Westside, and the remainder of the staff at Bridge. Chris decided that she would herself explain the research to Jenni and her nursery nurses and that I would subsequently visit the unit and talk with Jenni myself. Rosalind, on the other hand, preferred me to introduce the research at a staff meeting which she considered would be easier as I was already known by the educators at the school. At Westside I had not met Jenni before as a result of which Chris considered a personal approach by myself would be more appropriate. At Bridge Rosalind was the

sole gatekeeper within that setting, negotiating access to staff, parents and children on my behalf. At Westside, on the other hand, Jenni represented after Chris the next level of gatekeeper allowing me access to her own particular sphere of influence peopled in the setting by her nursery nurses, parents and children. This ownership of a particular sphere of influence within the school placed Jenni in a position whereby, although she acted as a gatekeeper, she was in a less powerful position than Chris to refuse access to me. In addition, before my first meeting with Jenni, Chris had already provided her with information about the project and personal details about myself, including the fact that I had been a headteacher. At our meeting, therefore, in explaining the research and its purpose I was also anxious to respond positively to Jenni's questions about my educational background by emphasising my own early years experience in order to establish a relationship of "mutuality" (Beynon, 1983, quoted in Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p.91). I also emphasised that as a researcher I would, firstly, be talking with and observing the work of the educators as a learning experience and, secondly, I would expect to participate in the work of the unit in a supportive role. At Bridge issues of access and attendant power rested exclusively with Rosalind as the gatekeeper. In one sense this made my meeting with the staff easier in that they would find it difficult to refuse my entry into their classrooms. This very lack of power, however, had the potential of creating suspicion of me, arising from my role as a researcher as well as a governor thus causing the possibility of a covert resistance to staff participation in the research. Therefore, my first meeting with the staff, as with Jenni, in which I reassured them of my intentions, represented only the first stage in a continuing process of not only gaining and renegotiating a more complete access to the settings during the research (Delamont, 1992, p.79) but also beginning to cross the "thresholds" which represent the heart of their underlying cultures (Woods, 1986, p.24).

My knowledge of Bridge Nursery School had led to an understanding of the ethos of the staff and the community which they served. This, in its turn, applied to my previous knowledge of Chris at Westside with whose views to a large extent I was already

familiar. This familiarity with both settings meant that to a substantial degree, especially at Bridge I was "at home" (Delamont, 1992, p.35), enabling me to take aspects of the two schools for granted. However, this same familiarity had the potential of challenging my ability to view the schools critically. In these circumstances, as a researcher, the danger of identifying fully with the values of the schools and as a result "going native" (Woods, 1986, p.34) leading to the dangers of "over-rapport" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p.110) introduced the necessity of engaging in the process of distancing myself from the settings intellectually in order to be able to look at them anew as part of a process of making them "anthropologically strange" (Woods, 1986, p.34).

The pilot study.

After the initial discussions with Jenni and Rosalind I then discussed with them my desire to set up a pilot study consisting of a small selection of families I could interview in order to test the viability of the interview techniques I proposed to use during the main study. Both Jenni and Rosalind, because they had not been involved in such a study previously, were anxious to choose parents they already knew and who they considered would be happy to take part. In order to make their choice easier at this stage I indicated that I would be happy to interview any families they suggested even if they were not Asian. At my request, they chose three families each for the initial study. Jenni had already discussed the research in passing to one father who was from Saudi Arabia studying for a PhD at a local University and who indicated that he would very much like to be interviewed in order to share with me his educational views. Jenni suggested two additional Asian families with whom she was in regular contact at school. She left the initial contact with the parents to me, whereas Rosalind acted as my agent discussing the project with her chosen parents, all of whom were mothers, and setting up the initial meetings, one at school and the other two in the parents' homes. Two of the mothers were Asian, the third being a French speaking mother of Vietnamese extraction who had moved from France with her husband and two children. Rosalind

came with me on this visit in order to share the speaking of French with the mother if the need arose. Access to the parents both in the pilot and the main study was more straightforward than I anticipated bearing in mind that I was a stranger to them who did not have an official position in the school. In these circumstances Jenni and Rosalind played a central role in reassuring the parents that I was researching families with their approval. Interviews for the pilot study were carried out with all the chosen families except one where, although I had an initial discussion with the mother, the family decided that they did not wish to take the contact any further at this stage because the father was working in the evenings.

The Parent and Educator Interviews.

The meetings and discussions with parents from the Asian communities represented a pivotal element in the research. The aim of the interviews was to explore the familial and cultural views which parents held and the way in which these views formed the basis not only for the early experiences of their children but also for the educational expectations and aspirations which parents possessed for them. I will begin by describing the way in which the study of the parents and their children was established.

The setting up of the main study of parents and their children.

In addition to the five families represented in the pilot study, members from a total of nine further families in the two schools were interviewed as part of the main study, six from Westside Lower School and three from Bridge Nursery School. Interviews with three of the families in the pilot study, one family at Westside and two mothers at Bridge, were used as part of my data analysis in the main part of the research. All the families forming part of the main study, therefore, were of Asian origin (see Appendix 1, for further details of the families in the final study). The decision to choose three extra families in the final study at Westside was founded on the fact that I had wanted to study the children on their first entry to their respective nurseries. As a result of illness I was not able to do this with some of the children whose parents I had already

interviewed and so I decided to include later a small selection of three additional children who would fulfil these requirements.

As part of the pilot study I asked three of the parents if they would take a tape recorder for a week in order to record themselves with their children at any times they wished, although I suggested that mealtimes when the family was together and bedtimes might be suitable occasions. The purpose of this request was to investigate the nature of the interaction between parents and children in the home setting and the languages which they used together. I also intended that it should provide data illustrating the descriptions in the parent interviews of their interactions with their children. However, both the process and the results presented technical problems related to availability of recording equipment and quality of recorded sound which prevented it from forming part of the final research. The results of the recordings at home provided a number of illustrations of parents interacting at length with their children in both English and their community languages. However, it was not at all certain that these instances represented a normal pattern of interaction. For example, on several occasions parents had to encourage their children to speak and the impression was left that in these instances interactions were forced and unnatural. With these reservations in mind I decided not to use this technique in the main study but to rely instead on the interviews with the parents.

The identification of families in the main study was carried out with the advice of Jenni at Westside and Rosalind at Bridge. I requested that the families identified should be those whose children would be entering the school shortly. In fact both Jenni and Rosalind suggested some families whose children had already started recently and who they considered would be willing to take part in the research. I also requested that if possible there should be families from all the Asian cultures represented in both settings. At this stage of the research both Jenni and Rosalind left me to contact the families on my own. I set out in the research to create a balance in numbers of children studied between girls and boys. However, as I remained guided by Jenni and Rosalind

as to their assessment of the suitability of families there emerged a predominance of boys which appeared to be purely coincidental. This meant that in my main study one girl and six boys were observed at Westside and two girls and three boys at Bridge. Such an imbalance between girls and boys, especially at Westside, may well have had implications with regard to issues of gender in the study, but which I was not able to pursue in relation to other topics arising from the research. However, this is a concern which would benefit from further research. In the final study eight of the families were Muslims, six of whom were originally from Pakistan and two originally from Bangladesh. The remaining four families were Hindus whose families were originally from India. Initially I approached each family identified either directly at home or at school if their child had already started in the nursery and I explained to them the purpose of the research and what kind of information I would be asking them to give me. All the families agreed to be interviewed, although two additional families were not subsequently seen either because of familial problems or because the family moved away from the area. In addition one of the twelve families forming the basis of the main study moved from the area shortly after I had interviewed the father and had made initial observations of his son when he first entered the nursery unit at Westside Lower School.

The form and nature of the parent and educator interviews.

My overall approach towards the interviews was to make them as unstructured as possible in the sense that I would be happy to follow issues and themes which the parents and educators might choose to discuss, but within a framework I had established before conducting each interview, and which was intended to ensure that certain topics were discussed. In the case of the parents, these topics included their educational and cultural views. In the case of the educators, the unstructured interviews were designed to examine their educational views and how those views had developed. Although this unstructured approach led in general to a lengthening of each interview I considered that this was necessary if I was to fulfil the wish not only to enable the

interviewee to feel that to a substantial extent we were engaged in a collaborative exercise, but also to give her an opportunity of feeling that she would be able to spend time in exploring ideas which she had perhaps not previously been able to express at length (Woods, 1993, p.160).

However, in order to keep each interview within manageable bounds I decided to prepare a number of questions which would act as an aide memoire during my meetings with the parents and educators (Woods, 1986, p.78; Nias, 1991, p.149). These questions were designed to remind me that there were certain topics I wanted to cover in the interview although other issues would inevitably arise which I would encourage the interviewee to explore by means of further questioning. The nature of the questions would vary between whether I was interviewing a parent or an educator (see Appendices 3 and 5).

The interviews with parents.

As a central task in the interviews I would need to build a picture of the parents' cultural and religious backgrounds in order to place their views in context and my initial questions would explore these specific areas in an attempt to establish specific facts. I would also ask them about the structure of their family including their own parents, sisters, brothers and cousins. I would then move on to ask them firstly about their child at home, in particular what languages would be spoken with her and what activities she enjoyed. I also asked questions about the parents' expectations of their child at nursery and of education in general, including the activities which parents or other family members would share with their child. It will be seen in Chapter 4 that although these questions provided a basis for my interviews of the parents, several other themes emerged during our discussions concerning culture, language and personal and cultural identity which introduced on occasions a very personal note into the interviews. It was these additional themes which provided in the final analysis the most significant ideas arising from what the parents had to say and justified the use of an unstructured interview format. I returned to six sets of parents in order to carry out second

interviews. These second visits took place some months after the initial interviews and were designed to explore representative views of the parents now that their children had been in the nurseries for a few months. The questions on the second occasion consisted of establishing any changes which had occurred in their children's behaviour, attitudes or interests during their time at school (see Appendix 4). I took the opportunity also of reminding parents of important points they had made on the previous occasion and checking whether they still felt those views were valid.

The interviews with educators.

The interviews with the educators, although they included some questions seeking specific information such as career development, were concerned also to explore the evolution of their professional ideas by means of a more systematic investigation of their life histories. This investigation generally included questions about their personal backgrounds, including their childhoods. These questions, which led on to those concerning career patterns, were designed to develop an ethnographic approach to the process of interviewing through an exploration of the basis on which the educators' ideas and beliefs were established. The interviews led, after this exploration, to a detailed examination of their educational ideas, including questions on how important they considered provision for bilingual learners to be as well as school and home links. Questions about each educator's educational philosophy were also included, for example, attitudes to play in the nursery and how they viewed early years practice in general.

I interviewed Rosalind three times and Chris four times, one of these interviews being a set of enquiries which explored issues of bilingual support which had arisen during the research. In total I interviewed Jenni five times, two of which concerned issues arising from an Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) inspection which the school had recently undergone. Returning to educators in subsequent interviews proved helpful not only in giving us an opportunity to continue exploring ideas discussed previously or examining new ones in the light of our previous discussions but also in providing me

with a means of checking that my interpretation of the educator's views in the previous interview was accurate. I also interviewed Anne, Linda and Nadia, the nursery nurses in the nursery unit at Westside and Kate, the Deputy headteacher at Bridge. Although I do not quote directly from my interviews with them in the study their views are noted where appropriate as a confirmation or otherwise of the ideas expressed by Chris, Jenni and Rosalind (see Appendix 2 for biographical information about the educators interviewed). In addition to the organised interviews regular informal conversations with educators took place either before, during or after sessions. These conversations generally consisted of comments about incidents during the previous session or discussions about events which had taken place in the school or issues of policy. This information provided a fruitful source of additional information about the school as well as the educators' views on educational issues.

The conduct of the interviews.

I decided wherever permission was given to tape record interviews. My decision to use this method of recording arose from a distrust not only of my own memory but also of my ability to write down the essence of what the interviewee was saying while at the same time being seen to give her my full attention. Using a tape recorder freed me from this particular problem (Woods, 1986, p.81). In addition, using a recorder enabled me firstly, to retain a faithfulness to what the interviewee had said and secondly, to give her an accurately represented personal voice, emphasising the validity of what she was saying and, as a result, providing her with a sense of personal power in relation to her views. Only one educator and one parent expressed an unwillingness to be recorded and I made notes during these interviews. Tape recording, however, introduced its own problems into the interviewer/interviewee relationship. Because the recorder did not have a powerful microphone it was necessary to place it very near the interviewee on each occasion. This resulted on several occasions in making my questions and comments difficult to hear. In addition if parents' children were present during our

conversations the tape recorder became a focus for their attentions and as a result they would either pick up the recorder or play with the controls.

Those parents who agreed to be recorded did not appear to be reticent as a result of the presence of the tape recorder although on two occasions when criticisms were made of the nursery I was asked for a reassurance that the interviews would be confidential despite the fact that at the beginning of every interview I gave such an assurance. In addition, one educator asked me to turn off the recorder while she made some comments about her school. On occasions when interviewing educators additional remarks would be made after the tape had been switched off (Measor, 1983, p.14). These remarks I would record as a field note and compare them with the subsequent transcription of the interview to assess their significance for the educator's overall views and beliefs. In a number of instances those remarks made off the record provided alternative insights into the educator's opinions.

All parent interviews except one, which took place at school, were held in the families' homes. This provided an environment in which potentially the parents would feel more relaxed and would also provide me with an opportunity of meeting the family in their home, giving me additional observed information concerning familial relationships and settings. Of the twelve families forming the main study I interviewed four mothers on their own and three fathers. The remainder of the interviews took place with both parents present. Although I would have preferred to have interviewed both parents together I was bound by certain factors, including the time of day the interview took place and whether the other partner was available at that time. Despite this apparent limitation those interviews I conducted with mothers on their own did provide me with an important insight into their views as women within their communities. I made the majority of the visits during the day, either in the morning or late afternoon. Four interviews were held in the evening although whether both parents were present did not necessarily depend on the time of day. The advantage of interviewing parents during the day arose from the fact that generally mothers or fathers seemed to have more time to

talk to me. This was because there was less pressure on them to be preparing meals for the family or preparing the children for bedtime. Interviews with educators were generally held in the schools either during session times or after school. Two of the interviews with Rosalind and one with Jenni were held in my home. Interviews held at school meant generally that time was limited because of alternative responsibilities. For example, on three occasions in the morning Chris was obliged to end our discussion because she had alternative appointments. On the other hand on the two occasions I was able to interview Rosalind in the evening in my home there were not the same pressures on her time, as a result of which our discussions were not interrupted and I was able to pursue ideas with her at greater length.

The length of interviews varied considerably, although interviews with educators were generally longer. Those with parents varied from half an hour to an hour depending on the parent's level of confidence. The interviews with educators would be a minimum of half an hour but more usually an hour to an hour and a half. In Rosalind's case two of my interviews with her each lasted approximately two hours.

Transcribing some of the educator interviews was carried out by a secretary which saved a considerable amount of time, enabling me to concentrate on data analysis. However, I transcribed some of the educator interviews and all of the parent interviews. Despite the length of time needed for this process, transcribing enabled me to identify words, phrases or even sentences which were difficult to hear on the tape due to lack of clarity but which I was able to recall from the interview itself (Simons, 1981, p.45).

Observations of Children and Educators.

One of the important tasks of the observer of children in the nursery setting is to draw meanings from all aspects of their behaviour and not to ignore what appears to be incidental and minor in the ways they function within their environment. For example, as I will consider in Chapter 3, which examines the theoretical perspectives underlying the study, and in Chapter 5, in which I describe my observations of the children and

educators in school, young children play with particular activities for specific reasons connected with their areas of interest and development and their relationships with others arise also from what is important to them at that time reflected in their general patterns of behaviour. It is necessary therefore as a researcher to attempt to enter the world of the young child and to understand the world from her point of view if we are to understand her patterns of behaviour (Corsaro, 1981; p.119, Boyle, 1998).

Observations of the children.

My study of the children, therefore, was designed to be a combination of distance observation and direct interaction where the opportunity arose. Distance observations were generally restricted to the children in my sample although in practice other children would be joining in with activities and I would note any patterns of behaviour which were of particular interest. For the child studies I experimented with a number of observation schedules. Finally I decided to use one which Rosalind had used in observations in the school and which she suggested might be useful in this instance (see Appendix 8). My method of employing the schedule was to follow a particular child for a minimum period of approximately five minutes, although this amount of time varied, depending on the child's involvement with a particular activity. Some observations might take place over half an hour if the child was manifesting a high level of involvement in a particular activity, for example, cooking. During the period of the observation I would note down everything that the child was doing including those instances where she might be moving from activity to activity. I also made a note on the schedule of any instances of verbal or non-verbal interactions between the child and another, including adults. At the end of the observation I would note down in the comments section of the schedule significant aspects of the child's behaviour during that observation, for example, if I had observed that particular behaviour on a previous occasion. I would also use the schedule when I was working or merely sitting with children while they were engaged with activities either on their own or in the company of other children. These occasions provided opportunities for a direct interaction with

individual children adding another perspective on the child. As I will consider in Chapter 5, it also provided opportunities to develop the potential for learning arising from adult/child interactions within the framework of a setting for play. The way in which I carried out the observations was designed to record the child's patterns of behaviour as a continuous process, each element of the pattern possessing its own relevance however small and giving meaning to the ways in which the child interacted both with her environment and with others.

Observations of the educators.

Generally the data collection on the educators was incidental to my observations of the children, taking the form of notes written after sessions describing the provision and examples of adult/child interaction or not as the case may be. However, I also carried out some specific observations of the educators using an observation schedule which I had designed for the purpose (see Appendix 9). This schedule was used normally on those occasions when an educator was working with a small group of children on a specific activity. It will be seen from the schedule that an important aspect of the sessions observed was the nature and extent of the language used between the adult and the children. This provided examples of the way in which educators interacted with children in a more structured setting.

On a few occasions at Bridge, I joined the educators as they met at the end of the morning to discuss issues arising from the sessions (Corsaro, 1981, p.127). Similar meetings did not take place at Westside. These end of session meetings gave me an opportunity to observe the review and planning process in operation in the nursery as well as the way in which individual children were observed and provided for.

Data Analysis and the Identification of Themes.

The comparative use of interviews and observations.

During the initial period of observation I generally visited the nurseries once a week. During those visits I would carry out observations two or three times in a session per

child depending on how many children I was observing. After some months I visited less often as I accumulated data and its analysis became a more pressing aspect of the research. The combination of interviews and observations within the settings provided a form of research triangulation in which the observations of the children and educators provided a check on what had been said by parents and staff. The observations also placed what had been said in the interviews in the context of real practice which "grounds the experience in a real-life event" (Woods, 1986, p.89). During the period of the interviews and observations I carried out analyses of the data collected in order to identify emerging themes in the research. For example, as I began to examine the first interviews with parents I identified areas of tension between their perceptions of the necessity of engaging with the English educational system and their own desire for their children to retain important aspects of their community cultures. As the interviews with parents and educators progressed and I carried out observations of educators and children in the classroom my analyses began not only to emphasise the parents' concerns but to place those concerns within the context of the limitations of the provision for bilingual learners within the settings themselves. This progressive focusing on issues arising from the data collected over a period of time led to the emergence of an escalation of insights (Lacey, 1976, p.61) in which themes such as that described above emerged and developed as I collected data over a period of time. However, after a period of time in which interviews and observations were made, data connected with this particular finding of the research began merely to confirm the theme rather than illuminate new aspects of the issue. In this way the point of "saturation" was reached in this particular aspect of the research in which sufficient data had been collected, any further data merely leading to repetition (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.61). However, I also found that the points of saturation would not necessarily be reached at the same time with other themes of the research, for example, issues of early years practice within the settings. In cases such as this data collection would continue in the form of observations in both settings after formal parent and teacher interviews had been completed.

The analysis of parent and educator interviews and observations.

With those tapes which I transcribed I spent some time listening to them both as a reminder of what had been said but also as a means of establishing themes that might be emerging. I would then transcribe them either in their entirety, if I felt there were issues being addressed which ran throughout the interview or I concentrated on those parts which I considered to be of particular significance. In the case of the interviews with parents (see Appendix 6) I then compared the transcriptions of interviews I had already conducted as well as any additional field notes I had made in order to identify similarities or differences in what the parents were saying. At this stage I identified certain themes which I felt were emerging out of this part of the data and wrote a short paper discussing my findings up to that point in time. As the interviews progressed I compared the themes I had already identified with what newly interviewed parents were saying. I found generally that these themes formed a recurring pattern of experience amongst all the interviewees, confirming the initial findings that tensions existed between the parents' need to make choices between asserting their languages and cultures and subsuming those cultures to their engagement with the worlds of the nurseries.

I carried out a similar process with the educator interviews although these took place over a longer period of time (see Appendix 7). My first summary of views expressed by Chris, Rosalind and Jenni was contained in an extended note detailing issues of their educational philosophies and stress arising from their management roles. I later wrote a paper on Rosalind describing her work and beliefs as a Nursery School headteacher. These summaries provided a means of bringing together some of the themes arising from these early interviews as well as a method of examining the motivation behind what the educators were saying.

The analysis of my observations again took place over a period of time as I continued to visit the schools. This analysis formed part of a comparison between what was being said by educators and their practice in the settings, including issues arising from the

children's patterns of behaviour within their play. This comparison continued as I interviewed further educators or returned to educators I had interviewed on previous occasions and as I continued to carry out observations in the settings.

There were a number of themes which became particularly significant as I then carried out a comparison between the interviews with parents and educators and the practice in the nurseries. I decided to concentrate on the issues relating directly to the origins of the research, in particular, early years theory and practice and the provision within that context for bilingual learners. Other important themes, for example, arising from questions of gender within the settings and which I have already raised in connection with the imbalance between girls and boys in my sample, provided issues which were important and which could form the basis for further research. In this instance, however, I felt that that very importance meant that I could not do justice to such a theme within the context of the requirements of the present study.

Relationships In Research.

The development of trust and understanding.

The ethnographic approach to data collection in the research represented a need to develop a relationship of trust and understanding between parents and educators on the one hand and myself on the other. Therefore, I had to consider a number of issues which could influence the level of trust accorded to me by the educators and parents. The first set of issues were those connected with personal characteristics arising from ethnicity, gender, age and professional background. The personal anxiety which I possessed regarding the building of a successful relationship with the families arose from my own ethnicity and gender (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989, p.89), not only in relation to access to the families, which in the event was easier than I might have expected, but also in my capacity as a white, middle aged male to understand and empathise fully with the experiences of my interviewees. Despite the possibility that "the anthropologist's status as a foreigner can allow some distance to be created from

such restrictions" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p.93) this particular doubt remained with me throughout the research and is an issue which would perhaps be worthy of study on another occasion. Nevertheless, all parents who agreed to take part in the research were welcoming and generally keen to talk about their children.

In addition, from the interviews with the parents, a number of significant and unexpected issues arose. For example, when first approaches were made through mothers I expected them to invite me automatically in the evening when the rest of the family was at home. However, this was not always the case and some mothers, though not all, seemed happy for me to visit them during the day when they were on their own with their children. In addition, as I moved beyond my interview framework to encourage parents to enlarge on their answers to specific questions on care and culture, the willingness of the mothers interviewed on their own to raise issues of their personal feelings through the medium of a discussion of their children was of significance, providing, as it did, an opportunity for them to share their concerns. These personal concerns arose both from their feelings as mothers as well as, in some instances, from their relationships with their families, emphasised also by their cultural concerns. For example, as I will examine further in Chapter 4, some mothers described their sense of loss and even of guilt as they and their children experienced the transition from home to school. This, in its turn, provided an important insight into the particular feelings of responsibility and parental status which mothers in particular felt in relation to their children, accentuated also by their personal concerns as their children began to embrace the culture of the nursery. Of particular significance in this respect was the fact that these expressions of concern, centred around personal status and responsibility, were not a feature of the interviews with the fathers on their own. In these instances their responses and answers were generally limited to specific cultural and familial information.

This contrast between mothers and fathers was emphasised further on those occasions when parents were interviewed together, although in these cases mothers were more

reticent in expressing personal feelings as mothers as compared with those mothers interviewed on their own. However, in each of these cases the mother took the greatest responsibility in responding to my questions in providing information about their children, reflecting not only their particular knowledge but also emphasising again their particular relationships with their children. In this respect the fathers appeared to be playing a subsidiary role in relation to their children and lacked the personal status and identification with their children which the mothers possessed.

Without exception parents asked me about my own professional background. In these instances the fact that I had been a teacher appeared to enable them to talk more confidently about the activities they carried out with their children at home, exemplified by the number of occasions on which they asked my advice. For example, some parents sought my view of the activities they should be using at home to help their children or which Middle and Upper schools I thought would be suitable eventually for their children to attend. In the case of the educators, although I was made to feel welcome by Jenni I did nevertheless feel that I needed to gain her trust over a period of time especially as she was aware of my professional background.

The second set of issues which could potentially affect the nature of relationships were those connected with my conduct of the research which in association with my personal characteristics described above required the establishment of ways of working with parents and educators which would be designed to put them at their ease. These included a combination of approaches. For example, as a man and a known former headteacher I felt that it was important for me to take account of the need for some "impression management" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p.83) in which, having noted the educators' attitudes to their personal appearances and heard their description of the formal ways in which some local inspectors dressed when visiting the settings, I ensured that my own style of dressing was appropriate to the way of working in the nurseries without being too casual (Measor, 1983, p.4), ensuring in this way that I was "a credible person doing a worthy project" (Woods, 1986, p.23). A more formal way

of dressing would have given the impression that I was neither serious about working with young children nor had any knowledge of the "messy" nature of some of the activities in which they were involved. Other methods of working were related to the development of particular ways in which I conducted myself with parents and educators as a process of personal establishment, both throughout the research and at particular key periods, for example at the beginning of the study in the settings, especially at Westside where I was not known already, and with individual families whom I was interviewing.

The first few months of working with Jenni and her nursery nurses exemplified the need to develop positive relationships based on trust (Woods, 1986, p.62; Burgess, 1988, p.139). Even at Bridge where I was already known I used similar techniques of personal establishment. During the first visits I did not make any notes in front of the educators, waiting instead to record my observations later. I also considered that in building a relationship my first requirement was to be seen to undergo a process of identifying practically with the educators as a way of establishing my credibility (Corsaro, 1981, p.123). This practical identification continued throughout the period of my observations within the settings and consisted of such tasks as making the tea, helping educators to prepare the settings at the beginning of sessions and helping the children to clear up at the end. It also included taking educators' story groups at the end of sessions so that they could concentrate on preparing materials and activities. In a less directly practical way I attempted to ensure that I noticed and commented positively on new displays and developments I noticed in the children's progress.

During the period in which I carried out observations in both settings it was necessary for me to ensure that they did not appear to present a means by which I was passing judgement on the educators as they worked with children especially as after a time I began to use the observation schedule described above. It was necessary therefore to be overt in my observations of children and to make it obvious that it was children I was observing and not educators. Even when I was observing educators working with

children I attempted to do this indirectly at a distance. There were occasions however when I needed to observe educators directly, for example when Jenni was working with the group of children who would be moving the next term into the school's reception class. In these instances after seeking permission I decided not to take notes but to join in the activities wherever possible or where appropriate. This I hoped would make my presence less threatening. I would then wait until later to record my impressions of the session.

Central to the interviews with the educators was my need to move behind the professional face to expose the educator's own self. In this way I was attempting to create a sense of "intersubjectivity" (Measor, 1983, p.3) in which the interviewee felt comfortable in revealing her own feelings about her personal background (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989, p.87). Above all what I was aiming for was a feeling on the interviewee's behalf that talking to me would provide a means by which she could express feelings and views which she had perhaps only rarely had an opportunity of sharing before with a fellow professional (Woods, 1986, p.69; Burgess, 1988, p.144).

To a large extent the strategies I used to achieve these ends were common to the interviews with both parents and educators. This creation of an atmosphere of empathy was of central importance in the establishment of an interview relationship. It involved for me the need to appear on the interviewee's side, to express understanding and sympathy for their views (Woods, 1986, p.77) and to make the interviewee feel through gestures and directed attention that what she was saying was important to me (ibid, p.79). It also involved remarks and occasional anecdotes of my own which not only emphasised our communality of experience in some respects but stressed the sympathy which I felt for their own experiences. In the interviews with the educators trust had already been established with Chris and Rosalind. With Jenni, however, the need to build trust had already been an aspect of our work but it was necessary to continue this process in our interviews within a mode of discussion which she had not experienced before. To a large extent this was also true when I came to interview Anne,

Linda and Nadia at Westside, but because Jenni had already gone through the process she was able to reassure them.

Because understanding of their experience was not a facet of my own knowledge when interviewing the parents I attempted through questions and supportive remarks to assure them that I was not being judgmental and that I appreciated the significance of what they were saying, for example, when comparing their own cultural standards with those they perceived as being current in English society.

The retention of distance and objectivity.

I have already described the notion of the danger as a researcher of fully identifying with the values of the schools. Woods (1996) suggests that for the qualitative researcher the problem is to steer a course "between involvement, immersion and empathy on the one hand, and distance and scientific appraisal and objectivity on the other" (p.61):

The former is necessary to understand others' perspectives as they see them, to see how they see others, to identify their problems and concerns, and to decode their symbolic behaviour (ibid, p.61).

The researcher, however, is also there "to analyse, to advance explanations, and to represent material in ways that might not otherwise occur to the inmates" (ibid, p.62). Therefore, in all interviews, I was obliged to tread a careful path between complete identification and independence. On occasions there would be a discrepancy between what parents and educators were saying, for example, in the case of ideas of educational practice, and in those circumstances my independence was important. My method in those instances was to express sympathy with the views of the parent or educator but wherever possible not to express a definitive agreement or disagreement with them, thus retaining a sense of neutrality. This proved difficult where my views were sought directly, in which circumstances I would attempt to be as non-committal as possible while expressing an appreciation of what the parent or educator was saying. In

the case of parents, however, I made no attempt to hide or neutralise my agreement with them on issues related to culture, language and, where the topic arose, their own experience of racism.

Shortly before I was due to begin the study of a group of children on their first entry to the nurseries in the summer term of 1995 I suffered a slipped disc which resulted in three months' absence from my observational data collection in the schools. Although I had already interviewed the parents I was unable to begin observing the children until the beginning of the following autumn term in September. This led to a break in the continuity of the research and accounted for the study of some of the children being delayed. I decided, however, to continue researching those same children as I considered that such a study would still be valid especially as I had already met and had discussions with the parents. During my time away from the schools I was able to continue with some aspects of the research particularly data analysis and the formulation of themes arising from the interviews and observations I had carried out previously. In addition, Jenni visited me at home to keep me informed of events in the nursery unit including how my group of children were settling in and Rosalind also visited me during this time in order that we could carry out my second interview with her.

Chapter 3: The Development of Children's Learning: A Theoretical Perspective.

Introduction.

In this chapter I will place the research into context by examining the theoretical standpoint on which this dissertation is based. It will act as a critical framework from which the experiences of the parents and the practices of the teachers in the two settings researched will be examined in Chapters 4 and 5.

I will begin by discussing the ideas of three thinkers, Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner, who have had a profound influence on contemporary ideas about child development and early learning. I will examine the ways in which Vygotsky and Bruner developed several of Piaget's basic tenets.

The foundations of modern theory and practice.

Piaget.

During this century Piaget's ideas of child development have been influential and still find echoes in much of early years practice amongst contemporary educators.

Learning as action and self-directed problem solving.

In Piaget's view action is primary (Edwards and Mercer, 1987, p.18). This belief arises from his notion that children, acting as individuals, construct a personal knowledge of the world around them by actively and practically involving themselves in it in a process of problem solving. In this way children are 'little scientists' (Epstein, 1993, p.90) creating meaning for themselves by means of personal interaction with their environment. The important aspect of this view is that children are perceived as active solvers of problems, creating and gaining ownership of their own knowledge and understanding. Piaget, however, presents a restricted model of the child's interaction with her environment. This is not viewed by him as possessing social and cultural

characteristics (ibid, p.90). Instead, the child's engagement is seen as taking place with the physical environment only, leading to particular concrete experiences such as handling objects, as for example, learning about conservation of volume by pouring liquids from one container to another (ibid, p.108). In addition, the nature and extent of these experiences are viewed by Piaget as being associated with children's abilities at certain stages of their development (ibid, p.90).

As part of this process of concrete experience Piaget describes the development of thought in young children as resulting from "internalised action" (Athey, 1990, p.33; Wood, 1988, p.19). This notion of action preceding the development of knowledge and understanding emphasises Piaget's belief in the active nature of children's learning. Of importance in the idea of internalised action is Piaget's notion of active experience leading to what he describes as reflective abstraction (Bruce, 1987, p.47). This consists of children reflecting on their experiences and making meaning of them internally as an act of thought. The significance of this idea is that children are thinking for themselves and making meaning of their experiences, the consequence being that "adults cannot think for children and transfer these thoughts by direct transmission" (ibid, p.47). This notion of cognitive development has particular implications for the idea of a directly didactic mode of curriculum delivery based on a particular adult view of the world.

The other way in which Piaget describes his view of the way in which children on their own make meaning of the world internally is by a process of assimilation and accommodation (Bruce, 1987, p.39; David, 1990, p.80; Wood, 1988, p.38). Assimilation consists of children using their existing skills and knowledge to incorporate new items into their already established ways of thinking. For example, Wood (1988, p. 39) cites the child's understanding through experience of the function of a bottle in terms of activities like "grasping , bringing it to the mouth, sucking and swallowing." Any new similar container can be assimilated into the child's existing ways of thinking about bottles to represent drinking as a "bottle related" action. Accommodation, on the other hand, is a process by which children have to adapt their

existing ways of thinking in order to assimilate experiences which do not conform to these modes of thought. In one sense each experience is unique and the need for some form of accommodation is always necessary.

The significance of Piaget's ideas of thought as internalised action and the processes of assimilation and accommodation are twofold. Firstly, they emphasise the individual nature of a child's meaning making as the actions of a "lone organism". Secondly, Piaget's emphasis on the importance of the way the child decodes experience internally and creates patterns of thought to make meaning of them is important in his concept of schemas which I will consider later.

Piaget emphasises the importance of play as a means by which children are able to interact freely with their environment. In keeping with his theory of stages of cognitive development in young children he divides play into three emerging modes of action (Smith, 1994, p.15). The first type is "practice play" in which the young infant (six months to two years) explores her immediate environment and in which sensory motor development predominates. The second type is "symbolic play" in which the child (from two or three to six years) develops socio-dramatic and fantasy play as a process of developing symbolic meaning from experience. The third type Piaget views as games with rules which are the natural development from earlier forms of play. Because of his belief in children's free interaction with their environment and the role of play as a medium for internalising these experiences Bruce (1991, p.34) emphasises his support for free play which she also describes as "free-flow play", otherwise described as "complex pretend play" (Meade with Cubey, 1995, p.52).

Language as an expression of experience.

In Piaget's opinion language plays an important role in the learning process but merely as a way of children representing and describing the world they experience (Wood, 1988, p.23). By this Piaget is suggesting that thought and mental operations are formed out of children's activities not by means of language and he asserts that developments in

cognitive understanding pre-date the linguistic means to verbalise them (Wood, 1988, p.132). In other words, thought precedes language and is not constructed from it (Edwards and Mercer, 1987, p.18). However, language does provide a means by which children can represent and describe thoughts and Piaget emphasises the way in which it can help to organise the emergence of thought. He also emphasises the benefit of talk with others, especially other children. In this way children are able to review and re-examine their way of looking at a particular problem. As we will see in the next section the problem in Piaget's view is that the extent to which children are able to talk about and describe things rationally will depend on their particular stage of development:

If before the age of 7 or 8 children have no conversation bearing upon logical or causal relations, the reason is that at that age they hardly understand one another when they approach these questions (Piaget, 1967, quoted in Wood, 1988, p.26).

Stages of development and the child as egocentric.

Two of the most controversial areas of Piaget's thought are firstly, his idea that young children pass through particular stages of development before they are able to think logically and in an abstract way (David, 1990, p.80) and secondly, that children's thinking in their early stages of development is what Piaget describes as egocentric.

Piaget's analysis of pre-school children's capacity for thought concentrates on the limitations of children between the ages of 2 to 5 to think logically. This notion is based on his idea that between the ages of 0 to 7 children pass through three specific stages of intellectual development: the sensory motor, the pre-operational and the concrete (Piaget, 1972, p.54). However, Piaget also stresses that there is no precise age at which an individual child will pass from one stage to the next (ibid, p.50).

Despite this degree of flexibility in his view of stages of development, the significance of Piaget's views is that children will only be able to understand concepts appropriate to

their particular stage of development. In addition, they will only be able to operate at a higher level if they have passed through a lower developmental stage (Wood, 1988, p.7). These ideas have ramifications for the way the adult is invited to view children's capacity for abstract and conceptual thought by creating a notion of readiness. For example, using Piaget's model described in the previous section, the degree to which children are able to understand what the adult is saying to them and their capacity to express their ideas logically and informatively will depend on their stage of development or, put another way, their competence. It can be seen that this view emphasises Piaget's notion of the need in the early stages of their lives, especially before the age of about 7, to concentrate on personal exploration and problem solving through interaction with their environment. This will enable children to move through sensory motor and pre-operational stages of their development.

Piaget's second idea regarding the children's developmental competency is linked closely to his idea of developmental stages. As a result of his own observations of children at play he maintains that before the age of about 7, children, despite the fact that they may be talking with others while they are playing, are not having a genuine conversation, in the sense that they are unable to view their world from the point of view of an alternative perspective. It is only later that children are able to look at things from another point of view:

Clearly...one must start from the child's activity in order to understand his thought; and his activity is unquestionably egocentric and egotistic. The social instinct in well-defined form develops late. The first critical period in this respect occurs towards the age of 7 or 8 (Piaget, 1967, quoted in Wood, 1988, p.26).

By egocentric Piaget does not mean that young children are selfish necessarily but merely that they are unable to decentre their views of their world in order to look at it from an alternative perspective. Piaget, in his observations of children at play together, emphasises the role of language in children's egocentric perceptions. At the age of

about seven children begin to understand the need to make themselves understood in what they are saying to others. In this way they are able to put themselves in the position of others and recognise that what they say has to be comprehensible to a listener who may not share their perception. Before that age Piaget is suggesting that when they talk of something to others they are unable to make their meaning explicit and capable of being shared because they make the assumption that other people view the world in the same way as them (Wood, 1988, p.131).

Schemas as forms of thought.

Piaget, in his emphasis on the concept of the child's thinking developing pre-eminently from "internalised action" examines how children are able to create meaning out of their experiences. He suggests that young children show repeatable patterns of behaviour which they develop and use in their interaction with their environment. These patterns, which he calls schemas, represent forms of thinking which children apply to objects which they observe and manipulate in order to assimilate them into the way they classify their experiences. This process of classification enables children to experience the potential nature and uses of the objects they manipulate. As they meet new objects they apply the repeatable patterns of behaviour, or schemas, to discover how those objects fit into their internalised system of classification. In their turn schemas can manifest themselves and be used by children not only in their physical behaviour but also in their speech or representation such, as drawings and paintings (Nutbrown, 1994, p.13).

Piaget identifies the nature of schemas when he describes the use by children of similar ways of acting on objects they come across in their play:

Schemas of action (are) co-ordinated systems of movements and perceptions, which constitute any elementary behaviour capable of being repeated and applied to new situations, e.g. *grasping, moving, shaking* an object (Piaget, 1962, quoted in Athey, 1990, p.36).

In a later section I will discuss the way in which contemporary early years researchers classify different schemas manifested by young children but, in the meantime, Nutbrown provides a familiar insight into the development of schemas in babies and infants:

Anyone who watches a young baby will see that some early patterns of behaviour (or schemas) are already evident. As babies suck and grasp they rehearse the early schematic behaviours which foster their earliest learning. Toddlers work hard, collecting a pile of objects in the lap of their carer, walking to and fro, backwards and forwards, bringing one object at a time. They are working on a pattern of behaviour which has a consistent thread running through it. Their patterns of action and behaviour at this point are related to the consistent back-and-forth movement (1994, p.11).

Piaget emphasises that as children's experience increases so development is encouraged as "new schemas are endlessly constructed by the subject assimilating the content of experience to schemas" (Piaget, 1969, quoted in Athey, 1990, p.44). This grouping together of schematic behaviours as children increase their experiences thus leads to the potential for them to manifest a number of schemas at the same time and apply them to a single object. On the other hand they may use one schema at any particular time on a number of objects (Athey, 1990, p.36).

Vygotsky and Bruner.

The child as an active learner.

In examining the development of young children Vygotsky emphasises with Piaget the active role which children have to play in the growth of thought and understanding (Wood, 1988, p.34) as indeed does Bruner (ibid, p.8). Because of their similarity in outlook towards learning as an active, problem solving operation Vygotsky agrees with Piaget on the importance of free play because they both view it as a means of children developing personally constructed rules in their activities which will be a useful

introduction to the forming and adherence to more formal rules in later games (Bruce, 1991, p.100). In this way Vygotsky agrees with Piaget that play develops into games with rules and that that order of activities, play then games, is an important sequence for children's development. Bruner, on the other hand, favours the introduction of games with rules from the start thus creating a structure to learning from the beginning (ibid, p.36).

The importance of language and communication.

It is in the area of the importance of language and communication in the learning process that Vygotsky and Bruner begin a partial deconstruction of Piaget's reliance on the primacy of action in the development of thought and understanding. Vygotsky's view of the way children learn differs from Piaget's (Mercer, 1995, p.71). Whereas Piaget maintains that the role of language is subordinate to experience in the construction of cognitive understanding, Vygotsky emphasises his belief that language has a strong influence on the development of thought. At the same time he is anxious to stress the importance of the partnership between action and language: "Children solve practical tasks with the help of their speech, as well as their eyes and hands" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.26). Moreover, despite Vygotsky's agreement with Piaget that young children do not think like adults he nevertheless disagrees with Piaget's central thesis that young children are unable to express ideas with understanding and are only able to express themselves from an egocentric viewpoint, despite the fact that he uses the same expression to describe the nature of 2 or 3 year old children's speech when they are talking to themselves (Mercer, 1995, p.5). Vygotsky views young children's speech as a social and communicative process both in its origin and intention (Wood, 1988, p.27). Therefore, he disagrees with Piaget's view that young children's speech in each others' company is egocentric and can be no more than what Piaget describes as "collective monologues" (ibid, p.27). Vygotsky also maintains that, for the child who possesses knowledge of more than one language, the development of the realisation that words and meanings are capable of being expressed in more than one way using

different language systems would lead to a greater understanding of the ways in which language works (Gregory, 1994, p.156; David, 1990, p.65).

The social and educational functions of language: Vygotsky.

Another area of divergence between the two lies in Piaget's notion of the learner as a 'lone organism': Vygotsky maintains that the importance of language arises out of his belief that learning is largely a social process in which interaction with others plays a key role in the development of knowledge and understanding:

Human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them (Vygotsky, 1978, p.89).

Vygotsky is emphasising here that the child is not only active in her pursuit of knowledge but she is also a social being using language as a means of communication and a source of building her understandings. He emphasises this co-operative view of learning by insisting that learning by interaction with others is a normal process in mental development (Mercer, 1995, p. 72). He cites an example of this when he suggests that cultures would be incapable of being maintained if there were not teachers, whom Bruner describes as "vicars of culture", to impart that cultural knowledge to the immature (Wood, 1988, p.24).

The full significance of Vygotsky's view of the social functions of speech lies also in his belief that children's knowledge can at any stage be expanded by interaction with other people who can provide the kind of support which will move forward children's understanding. This interaction can be by means of what Vygotsky describes as "guidance" or "collaboration" (Maybin, Mercer & Stierer, 1992, p.187). It is in connection with this belief that Vygotsky developed the concept of the child possessing a "zone of proximal development". He defines this as:

The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86).

In this definition Vygotsky is establishing the notion that children operate on two developmental levels, firstly, their present level bounded by what they are able to do now unaided and, secondly, their higher level which they could next attain. The relationship between these two levels is the zone of proximal development (Nutbrown, 1994, p.38). In Vygotsky's view this potential for children to reach the higher stage depends on the skilled guidance of an adult who acts as a catalyst to move them on to the next stage of understanding.

Vygotsky emphasises two interrelated sources of potential development for children. The first is the supportive adult, the second is by means of play:

In play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development (Vygotsky, 1978, p.102).

The scaffolding of learning: Bruner.

In developing Vygotsky's key notion of the zone of proximal development Bruner gives the concept a concrete and recognisable form by means of his idea of scaffolding, a metaphor he uses to describe the way an adult aids the child to move forward to the next level of competence:

If the child is enabled to advance by being under the tutelage of an adult or a more competent peer, then the tutor or the aiding peer serves the learner as a vicarious form of consciousness until such a time as the learner is able to master

his own action through his own consciousness and control. When the child achieves that conscious control over a new function or conceptual system, it is then that he is able to use it as a tool. Up to that point, the tutor in effect performs the critical function of "scaffolding" the learning task to make it possible for the child, in Vygotsky's word, to internalise external knowledge and convert it into a tool for conscious control. (Bruner, 1985, quoted in Maybin, Mercer & Stierer, 1992, p.186).

As with Vygotsky, Bruner emphasises the intention of enabling the child after help to take personal control of the task in a process which Bruner calls "handover" so that the child can then carry out the task for herself (Edwards and Mercer, 1987, p.23).

Bruner's agreement with Vygotsky's theories of the function of language in the cognitive process arises from his own belief that children do not on their own develop intelligence and adaptive thinking, but are influenced in those processes by more mature people (Wood, 1988, p.9). In establishing the notion of scaffolding Bruner also emphasises that the process, far from consisting of a simple transmission of information and methodology, should take the form of a 'forum' in which teachers and learners reach an agreed meaning through negotiation. In this context Bruner describes these shared understandings and ways of thinking as culture:

It follows from this view of culture as a forum that induction into the culture through education, if it is to prepare the young for life as lived, should also partake of the spirit of a forum, of negotiation, of the recreating of meaning. But this conclusion runs counter to traditions of pedagogy that derive from another time, another interpretation of culture, another conception of authority - one that looked at the process of education as a *transmission* of knowledge and values (Bruner, 1986, p.123).

In this description of Piaget's, Vygotsky's and Bruner's ideas a number of themes have emerged. Piaget's particular contribution to the notions of how children learn lies in his

idea of the child as an active learner, discovering and internalising knowledge and understanding by means of a largely self-motivated interaction with her environment. In this sense Piaget celebrates the child's actions as well as her capacity to move beyond mere passivity. In this respect Vygotsky's and Bruner's notions of the child coincide with Piaget's. However, there are areas in which Piaget's theories impose limitations on young children's capacities for learning. Ironically, despite his support for children as active learners his corresponding ideas of stages of development and young children as being egocentric in their interpretation of their world creates, in some respects, a deficit model of young children's abilities to learn and understand. In addition his insistence on the primacy of action relegates language to a secondary role in the establishment of thought and understanding. Above all, these views of children emphasise Piaget's image of the learner as a 'lone organism' acting as an individual rather than as an active social being.

It is in the picture of the child as a social being playing an active part with others in the negotiation of knowledge and understanding that Vygotsky's and Bruner's ideas contest the basis of Piaget's thought. This belief in turn emphasises not only the importance of language as a medium for shared understandings but contradicts Piaget's notion of the limitations on young children's capacity to learn beyond the limits of their intellectual development. Above all, Vygotsky and Bruner establish the adult's role through a process of support and co-operation in enabling children to move beyond their existing knowledge to new levels of understanding.

In the next section I will examine the ways in which contemporary ideas of early childhood education have built on the insights of Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner.

Contemporary Ideas of Play as Experiential Learning.

The relevance of play in the early years setting.

In developing the ideas of Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner, contemporary research into children's early learning has emphasised the importance of play as a means of

developing knowledge through practical experience in a way which is relevant to young children:

During play, children are free to make choices and to follow interests, are self-motivated, engage in play about what is relevant to themselves and their lives, dare to take risks, learn from mistakes without any feeling of failure, and negotiate and set their own goals or challenges (David, 1992 p.78).

Play is viewed as not only providing for children's physical and cognitive development but their emotional and social development also (David, 1996 p.97). Moyles (1994 p.4) emphasises the way in which in children's play the stress is on involvement in processes and in what knowledge children bring to bear on their activities. Bruce (1994 p. 196) describes the importance of what she delineates as free-flow play as being:

...about wallowing in what has been experienced, and dealing with mastering and controlling what has been experienced. It is about the application of what is known, using skill and competence that has been developed.

A number of research projects in recent years have emphasised also the value of play in the early years curriculum (for example, Athey, 1990; Gura, 1992; Meade with Cubey, 1995).

Contemporary research into the characteristics of play.

Contemporary research has set out to examine the character of play and its different uses by educators in early years settings. The first area of this research has centred on ideas about play and its contribution to the nature of learning. Hutt et al (1989) in their research found two distinct phases in children's behaviour during their play, delineated by an exploratory form of play and a free play following the exploratory phase. The first phase is represented by what they describe as "epistemic" behaviour which occurs when a child first encounters an object or material. In this phase the child will examine and explore the object with the purpose of establishing "What does this *object* do?"

(ibid p.221). In this way epistemic behaviour is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and information (ibid p.222) through exploring the characteristics of the object examined. The second and subsequent phase is represented by ludic play in which the child uses the same object or material in a diversionary way as a subject of her fantasy or repetitive play. In this type of play the child is implicitly asking "What can I do with this object?" (ibid p.221). The ludic phase suggests that although the child "gains no more new knowledge about the toy or material, (she) becomes competent at using that gained during the epistemic phase" (David, 1992 p.80). Bruce (1991) also distinguishes between those activities which she describes as "first-hand experiences" and the process of "free-flow play" in which the child engages as a result of those experiences. As with the Hutts, Bruce emphasises the role of what she describes as first-hand experiences as developing the "competence and technical prowess" (Bruce, 1991 p.82) which enskills the child by means of her exploration of those activities, objects and materials which interest her:

Although at first we struggle, as we manipulate, explore, and discover, we repeat and practise. This develops competence. We see this in specific skills (e.g. fencing) and also in a general context (being nimble and having quick physical reactions) (ibid p.82).

Bruce applies the term "free-flow play" to describe specific ways in which the child, in her play, uses the competencies learned. Unlike the Hutts she does not view the "epistemic", or first-hand experience, phase of learning as being play. Rather, in keeping with Vygotsky's view (1978 p.101) she regards play as part of a network of experiences:

...(F)ree-flow play is part of a network of related processes in the child, which include struggle, exploration, manipulation, discovery and practice - all catalysts to the child's development. Representation, games and humour are all processes which develop alongside free-flow play, and all these processes feed off and into each other (1991 p.57).

In delineating the nature of "free-flow play" Bruce describes twelve features of this type of play (see Appendix 10) which identify free-flow play as an "integrating mechanism" in which the child is bringing together and harmonising her thoughts, physical competencies and feelings through the process of her experiences:

Because children are given a large say in it - wallowing in ideas, feelings and relationships, and being able competently to apply their own learning in a voluntary and intrinsically motivated way - they gain what they need now. In this way, children integrate and apply their knowledge in ways appropriate during childhood, and in so doing, also prepare for adult life (ibid p.4).

This idea of the integration of knowledge gives the model of play greater status in the child's cognitive development than that suggested by Hutt et al's classification of ludic play in which the psychological role performed by this type of behaviour is emphasised (Hutt et al, 1989 p.226). In the free-flow model of play the child is using her first-hand experiences to apply her knowledge as part of an important process of being an active seeker after meaning:

From observations outside school, we know that children are innately predisposed to make sense of their experience, to pose problems for themselves, and actively to search for and achieve solutions (Wells, 1987, p.120).

Bruce further emphasises that an important characteristic of free-flow play is that because the child possesses a higher degree of ownership of her learning it thereby follows that she is able to master what she has learnt to a greater degree than if activities were directly structured by the adult. In this form of play also the child is not forced to generate a product for its own sake (Bruce, 1991, p.22). This is why in play children will attempt things they might not risk in everyday activity (Meek, 1985, p.49). Sutton-Smith emphasises also that because in play there are no pressures to produce a result the

child is left free to act creatively and innovatively (Sutton-Smith, 1975 quoted in Gura, 1992, p.117).

Contemporary ideas of the structuring of play.

The emphasis on ownership described above highlights the second area of contemporary research into play which is the degree to which it should be consistently structured by educators to provide a hierarchical set of activities around which the curriculum is constructed. In this model, play is likely to be guided, purposeful or functional (Bruce, 1997 p.96). The Oxford Pre-School Research Project (for example, Bruner, 1980) emphasised the "preparation for future life" model of play (Bruce, 1991 p.38), stressing that the child's play should more directly be guided and structured by the adult. Hutt et al (1989) suggest that as a result of their research into early years settings there should be a degree of structure within the nursery environment represented by "a greater degree of planning in provision in terms of materials, of staff and time" (ibid, p.230). However, they emphasise that this structure should be "transparent" rather than "opaque" (p. 230) in the sense that instead of an explicitly structured and imposed curriculum which directly organises the children's activities, careful planning for progression should take place between educators collaborating together based on their observations of children's play. The issue of the type of directly structured and guided model of play suggested by the Oxford Project has been challenged by a number of writers and researchers. Bruce's argument for the importance of children's learning belonging to them and not to adults is emphasised by Donaldson's suggestion that structured activities fail to address the issue of relevance for the child because they do not lie in present interests and contexts. In this way, they are disembedded:

Disembedded tasks are not spontaneous, they are set by the adult, and children must in turn 'set' their minds to them with deliberate constraint and self-control (Donaldson et al, 1983, quoted in Bruce, 1991, p.64).

Morris (1996, quoted in Bruce, 1997, p.96) suggests that structured play is likely to lead to "a deficiency model demanding the premature practice of what one doesn't know how to do."

Hutt et al (1989) maintain, however, that the transparent structure provided in early years settings is not always adequate and they discuss Woodhead's (1976) view of the responsibility which educators possess in order to achieve the success of what they describe as informal methods of play:

For Woodhead, the success of informal methods is dependent upon the ability of the teacher to maintain implicitly in the quality of her organization of activities and interaction with the children, the structural sequence and control which are maintained explicitly in a formal programme. Such a dependency makes great demands upon the staff and is something of which all teachers of nursery aged children should be aware (p.231).

The Hutt's are emphasising here the dual requirements of a potentially educative model of nursery provision built on a qualitative organisation and an active interactive relationship between educators and children. David emphasises that if children in their play within the nursery setting are to make sense of their learning then it becomes necessary for the dual issues of provision and adult/child interaction to be addressed:

...We must reflect constantly on our provision - the setting (indoors and out), the equipment, the people, the 'tasks', the styles of interaction - asking ourselves why the provision was thus and what happened as a result, if it was meaningful to the children, and whether we are able to indicate what learning went on (1996, p.92).

In this way, Bennett, Wood and Rogers (1997) argue for a Vygotskian model of teaching and learning in play in which the educator is "pro-active...in creating challenging learning environments and providing appropriate assistance at the right time even in play activities" (p.12):

There is an assumption that when children make their own choices, learning becomes a much more powerful activity. But in reality this is dependent on the range of choices available, the amount of interaction with more knowledgeable others (including peers and adults), the provision of supportive resources and the potential for activity to be connected with worthwhile learning (ibid, p.13).

In the context of the potential for worthwhile learning Nutbrown suggests that the physical environment of the setting should possess continuity of provision:

Those things which children see when they enter the nursery in the morning, the experiences that unfold and in which they engage need to have an element of constancy so that children can get on with the business of learning and are not encumbered with such worries as where to find things, who to ask or what to do. Children need to know that some things will remain the same each day...They need to know that something they begin today will be there for them to complete or add to tomorrow so that they can develop their own continuity of thought and action (1994, p.32).

It is argued also that continuity includes also activities which are “infinitely extendible” (Abbott, 1994, p.79; David, 1990, p.76) in the sense that they can be used at various stages of development and proficiency by the same child.

In these viewpoints the emphasis, in the first instance, on the quality of provision for play highlights again the importance of relevance which includes matching activities to the child culturally as well as to her interests and previous knowledge, as Siraj-Blatchford argues:

It does not matter how broad and balanced a curriculum is; if it holds no cultural relevance for the child then she is unlikely to perform to the best of her ability (1994, p.145).

In Chapter 5 I will return to the theme of relevance when I examine models of teaching and learning in the two settings. However, I will examine here current ideas underlying the reasons for providing a relevant curriculum and environment for ethnic minority children in early years settings.

Play and the Provision for the Bilingual Learner.

Within any educational setting there are two types of curriculum: overt and hidden. In many ways because it is implicit and not necessarily immediately recognisable the hidden curriculum becomes more difficult to define and identify consistently. Because of its importance in reflecting underlying attitudes, behaviour, relationships and the general ethos within the early years setting I will examine ideas connected with it in relation to issues of cultural diversity in the development of overt curriculum policy.

The relationship between culture and education.

I will begin by reviewing the word “culture” in order to define my use of the term in the study. Chinoy (1967, p.26) suggests that the term culture denotes “a way of life” which Singh (1993, p.34) argues “defines appropriate or required modes of thinking, acting and feeling”. Chinoy (1967, p.28) develops this idea by suggesting that cultures within societies are made up of three components, consisting of institutions or “the rules or norms which govern behaviour”, ideas represented by beliefs which are “moral, theological, philosophical, scientific, technological, historical, sociological”, and “material products or artifacts” which societies produce. Siraj-Blatchford (1994, p.28) maintains that the possession of a culture “determines what clothes we wear, diet, religious beliefs and relationships”. Singh suggests (1993, p.36) that groups of people who “share common cultural traditions which unite them in a single social entity” can be delineated by their ethnicity which within society as a whole identifies them by their “practices, beliefs, religion and/or language.” In this study I will use the term culture as delineated by Chinoy’s notion of the components of culture (1967, p.28) augmented by Siraj-Blatchford’s idea of cultures being defined by religious or philosophical beliefs,

and life styles, together with Singh's inclusion of language within this definition. In this way I will apply the term culture to delineate the beliefs, life styles and languages represented in my discussion of the families and communities represented in the study. I will also use the term to describe the ideas and beliefs of the educators as well as the nature of the curriculum and organisation developed in accordance with those beliefs. Within this definition there may well be variations. For example, the question of religion will be particularly important within the community cultures but may not feature necessarily within the cultures represented in the beliefs and philosophies of the educators in the settings.

It has been suggested that there is a significant relationship between culture and education. Bruner's notion that "learning in most settings is a communal activity, a sharing of the culture" (1986, p.127) emphasises the way in which education has been described as concerning itself with introducing children to a "pre-existing culture of thought and language" (Edwards and Mercer, 1987, p.157; Bruner, 1986, p.123). In this way Singh (1993, p.35) suggests that:

By passing on from one generation to another, established beliefs, knowledge, values, and skills, education contributes to continuity and the development of an organised social life. Thus, 'culture' and 'education' are inter-related processes of social organisation and social structure within a society.

In this respect, therefore, it can be argued that education and its institutions represent a powerful and influential tool in the dissemination of cultural ideas which they themselves embrace and represent. This, in its turn, raises the issue of the nature and composition of that culture, and the degree to which alternative cultures are enabled to engage with and contribute to the cultures of educational institutions in such a way that plurality and diversity are acknowledged, thereby making those institutions relevant to their alternative cultures.

The nursery curriculum.

This discussion of culture has particular significance for the idea of a nursery curriculum which is relevant culturally for the child. Relevance for the bilingual child within the nursery setting can be delineated by the type of overt provision which the child meets and the underlying cultural attitudes which are reflected by the educators in the policy and practice of the school, including the hidden curriculum. In the early years setting as in any educational setting the hidden curriculum is a covert way in which beliefs are “embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classroom life” (Giroux, 1983, quoted in Siraj-Blatchford, 1995, p.7). Although to some extent this can be said of a large number of children, generally as young bilingual pupils enter the nursery setting it can be argued that they are entering a cultural world of which they may have had little experience and in which in many respects their cultural knowledge and experiences are not celebrated or indeed understood. It can be suggested, therefore, that if the bilingual learner’s knowledge is to be genuinely recognised and used as a foundation for further relevant experiences then it could be expected that the setting and its underlying ethos might reflect this. The alternative is that a group of children could be left unrepresented in the curriculum and indeed in the life and culture of the school:

...No one group of people, however culturally defined, can claim all knowledge. Yet, in schools, knowledge - the content of what children learn - is often presented through a monolingual cultural perspective and/or in an immaterial or unconnected manner. Knowledge is essentially multi-cultural and diverse in form and what better context for its presentation than the multi-cultural nursery with so many perspectives naturally present and ready to be tapped? (Stevenson, 1992, p.36).

Wright (1993, p.42) further asserts that this same monolingual and culture specific approach can lead to the ‘ideal pupil’ model founded on the “lifestyle and culture of the teacher concerned”. I have suggested above how contemporary ideas of early years

education within nursery settings have centred around the pivotal roles of models of play in the learning process. Bilingual learners will meet one or more of these models as they encounter the world of the nursery. The potential opportunities which play provides for them take two forms. Firstly, by means of play the bilingual child is able and has the freedom to bring her own cultural knowledge and understanding to bear on those activities which interest her and which she can transform accordingly. Secondly, play enables the child to engage with and to collaborate with others. In this way, Moyles (1989, p.47) suggests that she has opportunities to share her cultural knowledge and to develop her language repertoire:

Collaborative play situations across cultures and gender, such play as in the home corner or variations of this pretend play situation, where different cultural media are added, supplements the variety of language used and values the diversity of cultures from which children emanate.

Although these opportunities for personal empowerment apply to all children, for bilingual children it can be maintained that the particular appropriateness and relevance of the setting for them will be of significance if they are to be empowered also. Siraj-Blatchford (1992, p.115) suggests that for the young child in her early experiences in the nursery setting the role of images is of importance:

While young children are still struggling with language, the impact of images is all pervasive. Images provide the means by which they absorb symbolic understanding of who 'belongs' in our society. There should be images, in our posters, books, jigsaws and other resources, that demonstrate and celebrate our racially diverse society.

It might be argued that the young bilingual learner on entering the early years setting should at least have the opportunity of viewing her environment as familiar and positive and to feel in addition that amongst all her skills her cultural experience and knowledge are valued just as much. In this way the bilingual child could retain a sense of personal

identity and worth which, after all, early years practice consistently asserts is the right of all children. However, Epstein cautions against the reliance on surface features in the provision of culturally relevant artefacts for young children:

Reliance on artefacts to give children 'first hand' and 'concrete' experience can encourage a superficial approach of looking at the exotic (Epstein, 1993, p.103).

Multi-culturalism and anti-racism.

It could be suggested that in order to avoid the danger of superficiality in provision for cultural and language diversity there could be a need to seek a culturally appropriate provision which reflects an attitude in the school setting derived from the formulation of policy based on a radical reappraisal of attitudes by all members of the school community. This could be based on the formulation of a set of principles founded on the notions that diversity is an asset rather than a problem and that the creation of a setting based on the celebration of diversity is the norm rather than an occasional token. In this sense the viewpoint has been taken that the experiences of the bilingual learner could be treated as a normal source of curriculum provision for that child:

Meaningful learning can only occur if what the child brings in terms of concrete experiences is seen by the teacher as the essential component of his/her planning of the curriculum and in the (resource-based) organisation of the classroom environment (Hazereesingh, 1989, quoted in Bruce, 1991, p.17).

In seeking to re-examine policy and to place cultural diversity at the core of the curriculum it has been argued that school policy could be founded on the development of an anti-racist viewpoint as part of or instead of multi-culturalism (Siraj-Blatchford, 1994, p.70; Epstein, 1993, p.103). The delineation between multi-culturalist and anti-racist approaches to policy and practice is reflected in contemporary educational debates, centred around the issue of what is viewed as effective and relevant in the development of a curriculum with cultural diversity at its centre. Siraj-Blatchford (1994,

p. 68) describes some of the elements which represent a multi-cultural approach to policy formulation and which includes beliefs such as:

That ethnic minority festivals should be celebrated and all children should learn about some other cultures, religions and languages...that the cultural diversity in our society should be reflected across most areas of the curriculum...that ethnic minority parents can be made to feel welcome by putting up multilingual posters and creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

This approach has been criticised as addressing only the surface features of cultures within the school setting:

It is not enough to offer a narrow multi-cultural curriculum which focuses on the diversity and difference of 'exotic' cultures. Such a tokenist form of curriculum promotes what has been referred to as the 'zoo' effect or the 'tourist' curriculum (Siraj-Blatchford, 1992, p.114).

May (1994, p.4) describes this form of tokenism as "cultural pluralism" and emphasises also its limitations:

Educational programmes promoting cultural pluralism have been added to the existing (monocultural) curriculum but have done little to challenge or change the cultural transmission of the dominant group within schooling.

This emphasis on the need to address the issue of the culture specific form of anglicised attitudes and mores in school settings introduces the idea of the need to "tackle the hidden and overt curriculum, pedagogy and school structures" (Epstein, 1993, p.103). Siraj-Blatchford describes this also as the need to "pay attention to the ethos and ambience within which children grow up and learn" (1992, p.114). These arguments embrace an anti-racist approach to policy and practice and Siraj-Blatchford (1994, p.69) describes some of the features of this approach as it influences curriculum development:

Only through the proactive promotion of black cultures, languages and black workers can the barriers created by racism be diminished...that early years settings and services should support black and ethnic minority families in their struggle against every day racism...that all staff are trained, familiar with, and capable of using the Race Relations Act, Children Act and Education Reform Act to promote anti-racist practices, procedures and structures...that the early years educators should consciously represent the black experience, and black and ethnic minority cultures throughout the curriculum.

However, May suggests that in reality the translation into practice of these kinds of anti-racist initiatives has been problematical and he quotes Carrington and Short (1989, p.ix, in May, 1994, p.5) to emphasise the difficulties which practitioners and schools have experienced in developing and implementing these policies:

Although the expanding literature has served to highlight some of the dilemmas faced by practitioners, it may also have led many of them to perceive the issue as unduly esoteric, politically contentious and divorced from classroom reality. Teachers' resistance to these innovations may also be due partly to the failure of those concerned with the formation and implementation of policies in this area to provide unambiguous and workable strategies for implementation.

May suggests that a more achievable solution could be to combine elements of both approaches whereby the cultural pluralism alluded to above is complemented by a structural pluralism involving the school in "structural or institutional change" (May, 1994, p.41). The nature of such a complimentary partnership is emphasised by Hulmes' (1989) assertion that organic rather than merely incremental changes are needed in schools, including "a thorough reassessment of curriculum content, of teaching methods and of the dominant (western) philosophy of education" (p.20, quoted in May, 1994, p.43).

Having examined contemporary ideas of provision for play and their relevance to ideas of cultural diversity I will now turn to the role of the adult in the process of teaching and learning.

Ideas of the Role of the Adult as Collaborator in Learning.

Some researchers, for example, Bruce (1987, 1991), Nutbrown (1994), David (1990, 1992, 1996) and Moyles (1989) have established a balance between the Piagetian idea of experiential learning and Vygotsky's and Bruner's notion of the importance of the adult as a facilitator in the learning process. Edwards and Mercer (1987) and Mercer (1995) however have given particular emphasis to the importance of Vygotsky and Bruner at the expense of Piaget. The emphasis on the role of the adult in the early years setting raises the issue in contemporary educational ideas of the way in which learning is a social process. Bruner's insistence on the function of the school as representing not merely teaching subject matter but "re-inventing, refurbishing and refreshing the culture in each generation" (Bruner, 1996, p.13) is of significance here. It suggests that viewing the child as a "lone organism", which is a danger implicit in an exclusively Piagetian model of play, presents an unbalanced model of the way children learn. The other side of the equation is that children also learn through the use of language in the process of "transactions with other people" in which the "scrutiny" of meanings and interpretations is by its very nature a "social process" (Edwards and Mercer, 1987, p.164) and that in any case children are members of a wider society (Epstein, 1993, p.92; Gergeon and Woods, 1990, p.2).

Scaffolding as a collaboration between adult and child.

The importance of the relationship arising from Bruner's notion of "scaffolding", which I have already discussed, is that it represents a collaboration between the adult and the child in which the child's learning forms an apprenticeship under the guidance of the adult. In outlining this idea Wells emphasises the importance of Vygotsky's notion that "what the child can do today in co-operation, tomorrow he will be able to do alone":

The crucial word in that statement is co-operation...to be most effective the relationship between teacher and learner must, at every stage of development, be collaborative. Teaching thus seen, is not a didactic transmission of pre-formulated knowledge, but an attempt to negotiate shared meanings and understandings (Wells, 1985, quoted in David, 1990, p.87).

This process of negotiation can be seen as a partnership between the learner and the adult in which they work together to make knowledge meaningful and relevant to the child (Wells, 1987, p.218, Wood, 1988, p.82).

The partnership based on the apprenticeship model arising from the process of scaffolding can be represented in the early years setting as a process of collaboration during play. In this model scaffolding could be indirect in the sense of providing relevant activities and materials or directly interventionist by means of a dialogue between child and adult based around developing children's knowledge through their play. The indirect collaboration can arise from the educator's observations of the child:

...(T)he idea is that the adult observes the child's spontaneous play and acts to develop that - rather than organizing activities for the children from the start (Smith, 1994, p.21).

Scaffolding by means of a direct collaboration can take several forms, from extending provision to verbal interaction based in both instances on the principle of what Bruce characterises as adult and child "developing play together" (1997, p.97):

Supporting begins where the child is and with what the child can do. Extending might be to give help with physical materials, create space, give time, dialogue and converse about the play idea, or help with access strategies for the child to enter into play with other children. Extending also involves sensitivity and adding appropriately stimulating material provision, and the encouragement of the child's autonomous learning" (ibid, p.97).

In other words, the physical provision within the setting can represent the foundation on which the adult provides the collaborative scaffolding from which the child's knowledge and understanding are constructed.

An example of the way in which it is suggested by researchers that the educator can begin to develop the physical environment of the setting as a basis for providing a relevant set of experiences for the child, is by employing observational techniques which identify, for example, children's patterns of behaviour or schemas.

Schemas and the development of the child.

In my discussion of Piaget's ideas, I described his notion of schemas in young children as repeatable patterns of behaviour which they develop and use in their interaction with their environment. I also described how he suggests that the child assimilates her experiences and fits them into her internal system of classification or ways of viewing things. This idea has been the subject of research and explanation during recent years (Athey, 1990; Nutbrown, 1994; Meade with Cubey, 1995) and as a result has become a suggested source of curriculum observation and planning for the early years setting.

Children's use of schemas can be observed in a variety of situations, for example, while they are playing in the home corner, with the sand or water, constructing models or painting. They can be categorised under two general headings related to representation and action (Meade with Cubey, 1995, p.20). Schemas of representation, or what Athey calls figurative schemas, are manifested in children's paintings, drawings or models. These are in essence static schemas because they are expressed through the medium of two dimensional paintings or three dimensional models. Action schemas are those manifested by children during their play and in this way they are termed as dynamic (Meade with Cubey, 1995, p.20). Both Athey (1990) and Meade with Cubey (1995) examined different examples of schemas under these two headings in which children as they played showed a propensity to manifest particular ways of representing their thoughts. Examples of representational schemas included children in

their drawings and paintings persistently drawing different types of straight lines or curves or spaces represented by the proximity of one or more objects to each other (Meade with Cubey, 1995, p.21). Athey and Meade with Cubey observed that these schemas developed in sophistication as the child's skills progressed, usually in a particular order of development. For example, curves would move from circular scribbles through stages to ovals and eventually to multiple loops (ibid, p.21).

Athey found that the children in her research manifested continuity of progression in the level of sophistication with which they used action schemas, moving through four specific stages (1990, p.130; Meade with Cubey, 1995, p.23). The examples cited are connected with the children's vertical action schemas. The first stage consisted of "motor" behaviour, or pure experimentation, for example, "Salam (3 years and 2 months) kept climbing up the ladder and sliding down the slide" (Athey, 1990, p.131). The next stage was at the level of symbolic representation in which the child represents the schema by applying her own imagination, for example, "Brenda (3 years and 1 month) dropped toy aeroplanes from a height, saying, 'The aeroplane has fallen down'. Later she played a *falling-down* game, shouting with enthusiasm, 'I've fallen down' (ibid, p.132). The third stage consisted of schemas related to functional dependency relationships which means that the children are beginning to observe the effects of action on objects around them (ibid, p.70). For example:

Amanda (3 years 6 months) put water into a balloon. She told the teacher that the balloon filled with water was heavy. Mrs B asked how she knew. Amanda said, demonstrating, 'Look, I can't lift it. I can lift this' (lifting the one filled with air) (ibid, p.133; Meade with Cubey, 1995, p.23).

The final stage noted by Athey was at the level of conceptual thinking in which children are able to apply their schemas to abstract thought, for example, "Amanda (now 4 years and 1 month) 'You know leaves? They fall off the tree on to the ground (pause) and acorns fall off the tree' (ibid, p.133; ibid, p.23).

Two aspects of the child's use of schemas are particularly important. The first is that she is able to manifest more than one schema at the same time particularly as she becomes more mature. In this way "schemas become co-ordinated with each other and develop into systems of thought" (Athey, 1990, p.160). The second aspect is that as the child develops and increases her repertoire of schemas she revisits those she has formerly used but this time at a more sophisticated level as in, for example, playing with blocks:

Children often return to forms already mastered, to try out a novel or more complex variant, such as the stacking of vertical enclosures. Sometimes, when it looks as if a particular form has dropped out of the child's repertoire, it reappears in combination with the latest discovery (Gura, 1992, p.65).

It can be suggested, therefore, that the significance of knowledge about schemas is the way that it can be used as a tool for making sense of the way children behave at play in the early years setting, behaviour which otherwise can at times appear idiosyncratic (Athey, 1981, in Nutbrown, 1994, p.21). In this way observations of the child can be used as a way of distinguishing between form and content in the activities with which she is engaged. Nutbrown (1994, p.12) observes that form, through the recognition of the child's schemas, precedes and provides a way of identifying appropriate content or individual provision:

If a child is focusing on a particular schema related to roundness we could say that the child is working on a circular schema. The *form* is the 'roundness' and the *content* can be anything which extends this form: wheels, rotating machinery, rolling a ball, the spinning of the planets!

In the same way, Athey (1990, p.83) maintains that paying attention to content before identifying similarities of form ignores potentially an important observational tool in the provision of appropriate and developmental activities for the child.

Adult and child using language together.

Bruce emphasises that another way in which collaborative learning can take place is by the adult recognising and taking advantage of the “teachable moment” (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996) as children “struggle”, for example, when they are trying to swing from rung to rung on the climbing frame in the park:

...It is important for adults to be on hand to help children at times of struggle, i.e. learning to swing on the climbing frame. We can actively and directly teach techniques which help children to swing, etc. This is then used spontaneously and without adult pressure in the child’s free flow play (Bruce, 1991, p.84).

There are two particular points of interest in what Bruce is saying here. Firstly, although she is not using the words specifically, she is describing an aspect of Bruner’s notion of scaffolding in the sense that the educator is assisting and supporting the children before handing over the activity to them after they have reached a higher degree of competence. Secondly, she talks of teaching the techniques to the children and in this way she is asserting the need for direct instruction where appropriate. Wood (1988, p.76) characterises the consequences of unassisted struggle as being the creation of uncertainty which overcomes the child:

When we help the child to solve a problem, we are providing conditions in which he can begin to perceive regularities and structures in his experience. Left alone, the child is overcome by uncertainty and does not know what to attend to or what to do.

It can be seen, therefore, that research into early years practice has, in general, moved away from an unreconstructed Piagetian approach to one based on play allied to a collaborative mode in which the adult plays an active role with the child in the construction of knowledge by means of a process of scaffolding. In connection with this way of working, Bruce (1992, in Gura p.20) describes, firstly, the essence of what she describes as an interactionist approach, comparing it firstly with a “laissez-faire” or

“stand back and light the blue touch paper approach” (David, 1990, p.86), and secondly the didactic mode where a body of knowledge is imparted to the pupil:

The *laissez-faire* approach tends to leave children where they are. The didactic approach gives children only the “right” ideas. The interactionist approach begins where children are, helping them to use what they know, and to move with them into new knowledge and understanding.

It can be argued, therefore, that a collaborative approach contains a number of facets, enabling the adult to involve herself with the child either directly or indirectly. She establishes an indirect collaboration with the child by providing the elements of an environment which are relevant to the child’s interests and concerns, providing the props, materials, the space and time. The direct collaboration can take the form of the adult joining the child and aiding her learning through suggestions and conversations. The adult can also, as Bruce has described above in the episode of the climbing frame, help the child where appropriate by direct instruction, teaching specific skills which the child will need for her next stage of learning. In all these areas of collaboration the idea of scaffolding can be seen to be important.

The nature of language used in collaborative learning.

The collaborative approach stresses Vygotsky’s and Bruner’s views by emphasising the importance of language as a means of reinforcing understanding. Wells (1987, p.156) stresses the importance in conversational speech of aiming to “make the words fit the world” which is being explained and interpreted as the adult supports and develops the child’s understanding. In this way it has been emphasised that not only is the established relationship between learner and adult important but the language within that relationship is central to the success or failure of the process of scaffolding the child’s knowledge (see Bennett, Wood and Rogers, 1997, p.14). Edwards and Mercer emphasise what they view as the need for a shared understanding based on the type of language which is capable of moving forward the child’s knowledge:

What really matters is the interpretation put upon that experience, the words that define and communicate it, the principles encapsulated in the words. And it is largely the teacher who provides those words while eliminating others from the common vocabulary, governing the discursive process in which particular descriptions and versions of events are established as the basis of joint understanding (1987, p.151).

In the final analysis, Nutbrown (1994, p.75) argues that what is required in the early years setting is an environment in which language and its use by and between its members becomes a resource in the process of developing children's knowledge and understanding:

Part of the responsibility of teachers and other educators is to ensure that children hear a wide range of talk and terminology and can therefore generate the words they need to be able to talk about their own findings and communicate their important and developing ideas through language.

Collaboration through language and the bilingual learner.

I have described previously the nature of learning in school as being in essence a social and cultural experience. It can be suggested that this has particular significance for the child entering the nursery setting for the first time:

When children come to school they face several new species of communication demands and requirements. It is reasonable to suppose that a child who *shares* a dialect and way of speaking with her teacher is less likely to face problems of communication and, hence, learning, than is the child whose dialect is very different (Wood, 1988, p.217).

Dialect is one form of speech by which a child can find herself at a linguistic, and sometimes social, disadvantage in the culture of school. The possession of a first language which is not English is another way in which a child can be disadvantaged and

it is in that context that I will now examine current ideas of the significance of language for the bilingual learner in the early years setting.

I will begin by reviewing the expression bilingual itself and the different definitions applied to it. Levine (1990, p.5), Bourne (1989, quoted in Mills and Mills, 1993 p.61) and Siraj-Blatchford (1994, p.47) retain the description bilingual and use definitions which are largely similar. Levine describes the term as referring to those children "who use one or more languages other than English in their ordinary lives in and outside school." Siraj-Blatchford refers to more than one language being used regularly in the user's "particular language communities" whereas Bourne refers to the "alternate use of two languages in the same individual." Mills and Mills (1993, p.4) use the term "developing bilingual" to denote the fact that the child is "somewhere along the spectrum which has 'monolingual' at one end and 'balanced bilingual' or 'code switcher' at the other." Gregory (1994, p.155) suggests the use of the term 'non-native' speaker is more honest because the use of the term 'bilingual' "is misleading as it implies that 'bilinguality', i.e. both languages, are being developed in school". She also uses the term "emergent bilinguals" (1996, p.8) to describe children "who are the first generation in their family to receive formal schooling in the new country, who do not speak the language of the host country at home and who are consequently at the early stages of second language learning." All the children forming the subjects of my study were born in this country and entered the nursery settings with some knowledge of English. Therefore, for the purposes of this section and for ease of use I will retain the term bilingual and use it in the sense in which Levine uses the term although as with Levine and with Bourne (1989, quoted in Levine, 1990, p.5) this does not imply that the child is using the languages with equal proficiency.

I have already, in the section on experiential learning, discussed the implications for the bilingual child of policy and the attitudes of adults within the life and curriculum of the setting. It can be argued that because of the way in which language represents an expression of culture the attitude towards the child's first language in school and its

relationship to the development of English can be of primary importance in the way the child relates to her setting. If the attitude of the educators is one in which they set out in policy and practice to support the child's culture and community language then it could be maintained that the child's ability to relate to her new nursery on first entry will be a successful and meaningful transition into the new environment. However, it might also be argued that if the attitude is negative and the child's linguistic skills and cultural experiences and knowledge are not recognised as a positive resource then her introduction and continuing life in school may consist of a series of alien experiences in which nothing that she possesses will be valued (Grugeon & Woods, 1990, p.217). It has been suggested that if the child's language is not valued she may learn to view it herself in a negative way (Siraj-Blatchford, 1994, p.46). Sealey describes this in terms of the effect such an experience would have on the child's view of school through the idea of the close relationship between language and identity:

...Young bilingual children have considerable personal experience on which to build their knowledge about language, and attitudes to school and learning may be affected by the school's attitude to their language, underlining the correlation between language and identity (Sealey, 1990, p.49).

It has been suggested that on first entry to the nursery the opportunity for the bilingual learner to use her first language enables her to retain an important aspect of her personal cultural identity and to ease the transition from home into school (Mills & Mills, 1993, p.54). In the same way, this encouragement can enable the child to identify with others she meets in her new setting and who are from her own community and to retain a sense of group identity (ibid. p.54). This can also help the child's feelings of security in her new setting which in its turn provides her with the confidence to "venture" into the language and culture of the setting itself (Siraj-Blatchford, 1994, p.45).

These potential educational benefits of the bilingual learner's first language suggest that it can be a major resource in the learning process. In addition, it has been maintained that it also represents an important resource in the development of language in general,

echoing Vygotsky's notion, which I discussed previously, of the linguistic benefits accruing to those children who have knowledge of more than one language. For example, as a result of the Bradford Project (1979, in Siraj-Blatchford, 1996, p.30; in Gardner, 1991) and the Calderdale Report (1986, in *ibid*, 1991) it has been argued that the development and encouragement of knowledge of the child's first language has a direct bearing on the success with which she develops a second or third language including English (Siraj-Blatchford, 1994, p.46; Wiles, 1985, p.91). The Bradford Project (Siraj-Blatchford, 1996, p.30), for instance, concluded that bilingual Panjabi and English speaking children performed more successfully in English when they had the opportunity to use Panjabi in school and were also taught using their first language together with English. It has also been suggested that an important result of this approach can be that as the child grows in confidence in her new language the balance between the two has the potential to provide further cognitive benefits:

If the balance is right, the expectation is that each will feed off and enhance the other, to the benefit of the learner, in terms of language, cultural sensitivity and cognitive functioning (Mills & Mills, 1993, p.5) (see also David, 1990, p.65).

The important idea expressed here is that in viewing the child's first language as a linguistic and cognitive resource there is an emphasis on the notion of the important benefits accruing from a knowledge of language whether it is English or a community language. English will be pivotal in the life of the child but it is claimed that developing knowledge of her first language has the potential to lead to the benefits of "interlanguage" (Selinker, 1972, quoted in Mills and Mills, 1993, p.3) a term used to refer to the learner's own language system which develops through use and experimentation:

Here there is movement back and forth between two or more languages, as the learner makes use of existing knowledge to forge new understanding. The stress is on process, rather than product, and acceptability of 'errors' is as

justifiable in this area as it is in any other realm of developing understanding (ibid, p.3).

It follows from this that in theory the bilingual child's knowledge of language (and culture) provides a major starting point for her education in school if it is recognised in that context.

Conclusion.

In this chapter I have described contemporary ideas regarding teaching and learning in the early years, the relevance of these to bilingual learners and ideas regarding cultural and language diversity in the policies and practices of schools.

I emphasised, firstly, that the use of play is regarded as important in contemporary ideas of early years education as a source of developing children's knowledge and understanding, despite differences of emphasis amongst researchers, for example, Bruce, 1987, 1991; Bruner, 1980; Hutt et al, 1989, and reflected in the debate around the degree to which a direct structuring of activities in relation to play should form a central part of classroom practice.

In relation to play as a methodology, I examined its relevance for the bilingual learner. As part of this examination I also described ideas of the significance for the bilingual learner of the extent to which her community language and culture should form part of the life and curriculum of the setting. I discussed the arguments for the need for the child's first language and culture to be effectively represented in the school. I also described contemporary ideas of how this could be made realistically more effective by a process of development of policy and practice within schools.

The arguments for the importance of educators providing opportunities for bilingual children's community languages to be represented in schools emphasise the importance of contemporary ideas built on those of Vygotsky and Bruner, concerning the centrality of the adult in the learning process and I examined how, to one degree or another,

contemporary ideas of early years practice embrace this concept. This, in its turn, emphasises the notion of the process of “scaffolding” of knowledge arising from the relationship between child and adult. Despite the fact that a potential for contradiction exists between, on the one hand, a commitment to free play based on the idea of children being free to engage with the nursery environment on their own terms, and on the other, the notion of adult intervention in play (Bennett, Wood and Rogers, 1997, p.8), my description of contemporary ideas does, in general, reveal a commitment to an approach to teaching and learning in the early years based on this relationship. Given my description of notions of cultural and language diversity it could be argued that such a relationship provides an important and relevant source of teaching and learning for bilingual learners in their early years.

It has been suggested that both Piaget’s notion of the child’s learning developing from an active involvement with her environment and Vygotsky’s emphasis on learning as a social and collaborative undertaking represent what is termed as a social-constructivist model of teaching and learning (Bennett, Wood and Rogers, 1997, p.128; Epstein, 1993, p.104), a model which has been largely delineated in my discussion of contemporary notions of combining play with a collaborative approach to teaching and learning. It has also been argued that the personal knowledge and understandings of their worlds which both participants bring to that collaboration is central to the notion of meaningful teaching and learning (Woods, 1992, 1996). In this way, the theoretical background which I have described in this chapter will form the context in which the examination of the policies and practices of the schools will take place, built around an examination into the extent to which both children and educators are engaged actively together in the process of what will be described as creative teaching and learning (Woods, 1990a, 1993, 1995; Woods and Jeffrey, 1996).

In relation to the ideas of cultural and language diversity which I have discussed in this chapter, I will firstly, in Chapter 4, turn to an examination of the views of the parents of the children in this study. It can be maintained that the importance of this examination

arises from the idea that the bilingual child's own cultural and linguistic knowledge will have been gained within her own family and community. It can also be emphasised that her family will have been involved in an active process of social and educational interaction with her and that these interactions will arise out of the family's own views of education, their educational and social aspirations for their child and the ways in which they view the education on which their child is embarking. Therefore, it is to these views that I now turn.

Chapter 4: Parents and their Children: The Experience of Engagement with the Nurseries.

Introduction.

In this chapter I will discuss the views of the parents whose children formed the subjects of this study and consider their significance. I will begin by examining the diversity of the parents' cultural backgrounds and their active involvement in the development of their children at home. I will argue that a knowledge of these experiences would provide potential benefits for the work of the nurseries. I will examine also the nature of the children's and parents' experiences of engagement with the nurseries and the growing influence of the settings on the lives of their children, exemplified by the developing imbalance between the children's use of English at the expense of their community languages. I will argue that this growing imbalance, in its turn, created unresolvable tensions for parents between their attempts to engage with the culture of the nurseries, exemplified by their desire for their children to develop their English as a symbol of achievement, and the consequences culturally of such an engagement.

I will end the chapter by describing the ways in which the parents attempted to assert the validity of their cultures and community languages within their homes and communities as a result of their children's experiences in the nurseries.

The parents' descriptions of their own cultural and language backgrounds, together with the active role played by them in the education of their children at home presented a picture of a store of knowledge and experience which potentially had a considerable amount to offer the settings which their children were about to or had already entered. In the first instance, the parents' own backgrounds represented a cultural and language diversity which added substantial depth to the nature of familial and community experiences and relationships.

The Parents' Educational Backgrounds.

In the case of all the families of Indian origin both parents had been born and educated in this country. In the case of the Muslim families the situation was more varied. Of the families originally from Bangladesh only one mother was born and educated in this country, the remaining parents having come from Bangladesh to live in Britain. Of the parents whose families came originally from Pakistan one mother was born and educated in this country, one was born in Pakistan and educated in Britain for a time and the remaining mothers were born and educated in Pakistan. Of the fathers, two were born and educated in this country while the rest were born and educated in Pakistan. This particular aspect of the diversity of experiences amongst Muslim parents was present in a number of families except for four where both parents were born in their respective countries of origin. In the other families either the mother or father had been born in Pakistan or Bangladesh.

Another important aspect arising from the different cultural backgrounds of the parents was the languages which they spoke with their children both at home and in their communities. These languages included Bengali, Panjabi and Urdu, some parents speaking both Panjabi and Urdu. All parents spoke English either fluently or with varying degrees of confidence. The intermingling of early cultural experience represented by the parents' divergent personal backgrounds led often to a diversity of languages spoken by parents within the same home. For example, in one home (Iqbal Ali) the mother who had been born and educated in Pakistan normally made a point of speaking to her children in Urdu, although she also had a knowledge of Panjabi and English. In contrast her husband who had been born and brought up in the area in which Westside Lower School was situated tended to speak in English as well as some Panjabi to his children. This diversity of language use, although particularly marked in this example, was the experience of all the families studied to a differing degree and became a distinct feature of the linguistic interaction between members of the family,

either between parents and children or between sisters and brothers even where knowledge consisted of English and one other community language only.

The fact that it was normal for members of each family to be engaging in a variety of languages meant that the children were obtaining diverse and early cultural and linguistic experiences. These experiences were supplemented and extended by the generally consistent way in which parents engaged with and encouraged their children's interests and education, both at home and at nursery.

Parents as Educators.

In all cases parents viewed the schools as a central experience for their children, whether their children had already entered the nursery or were about to start. In discussing their educational ideas all parents were expecting different things from the educational process but which, without exception, reflected their substantial aspirations for their children. These aspirations varied depending on how the parents perceived their children's future. For example, Mr and Mrs Islam wanted their children to enter professions, such as medicine or teaching, and Mr and Mrs Ali wanted Iqbal to be an engineer. Mr and Mrs Jain on the other hand merely wanted Naveen to be happy in his life:

Me and my husband we just feel as long as they're happy , we're not really that ambitious for them, we don't want a child to be backward, you know, be achieving well, but we just want them to be happy...At the end of the day it's what they want, we can't really say what we would like for them...whatever he wants to do. If he decides that, "No, sorry mum, don't want to do that", not going to push him, definitely not.

A common factor with all the parents was that they had a positive attitude towards their children's education arising directly from their aspirations. Because of this consistent interest some parents, although they accepted the principle of play as a means of delivering the curriculum were looking for something more. This varied from wanting

to see good discipline (Jabidul's father) to viewing the school as a central part of a community of cultures. This was particularly true of Mrs Mousaf who was keen "not to isolate the school but make it a community school," and of Mr Sarwar again who had specifically chosen the school because it would be more suitable culturally for Jabidul.

Some parents voiced concern about the more long term use of play in the nursery. This concern took the form of expressing a preference for a more formal academic approach after their child had been in the nursery for some time. Aleena expressed the view that she would like to see the children have a more structured approach during their last term in the nursery so that they could get accustomed to what she perceived as the more formal systems ruling in the lower schools. Mr and Mrs Ali (Iqbal's parents) considered that once a child had reached the age of four more formal work should begin:

I think play to a certain extent is OK but if they're just going there to paint, well painting's OK for them, my view is let them play first from three to four then from four they should slowly, slowly start breaking them into having some experience of school (*Mrs Ali is nodding in agreement*).

Whatever the parents' aspirations were for their children and whatever they expected from their children's schools, all parents interviewed considered personal support and the education of their children as part of their responsibilities as carers. This support arose consistently out of an anxiety to further their children's education in any way they could. The parents' role as educators consisted of either encouragement and tolerance of their child's interests or an active attempt to further specific activities which could be school dependent such as sharing books or retelling stories or early number work.

Encouragement of the children's personal interests.

The personal interests of the children consisted of those activities which they pursued on their own behalf and those which were in some way shared with their parents or with siblings. The activities pursued on their own or with sisters or brothers were

described by the parents as ranging from watching television to playing hide and seek. Girls in addition to these activities usually favoured those centred around home play and dressing up, for example Aisha and Aditya, whereas for the boys their interests tended to be playing football or going to play on the swings, for example, Naveen, Jabidul. Attia on the other hand particularly enjoyed fighting with her two sisters.

In addition to these interests it was significant that those children who had older sisters or brothers or had already had some experience of the nursery had developed interests which were on the whole school dependent. These activities consisted of drawing and painting as well as looking at books which sisters and brothers had brought home from school, for example, Aisha. Iqbal and Zeeshad were described by their parents as enjoying scribbling on pieces of paper. These early attempts at emergent writing were based on what the boys had seen their brothers doing and provided an important early experience of the purposes and significance of writing as a communicative medium.

Interests shared with parents consisted of occasions when the family went out together or when the child went out with an individual parent. Trips taken as a family were usually for the purpose of visiting relatives but most of the children accompanied individual parents to the shops, for example, Aditya. Two sets of parents (Iqbal and Naveen) took their sons to the park to play football and Naveen enjoyed trips in the family's car. Despite the constraints of time these opportunities to share interests with their children were considered by the parents to be positive experiences, as when Iqbal's father described the activities he and his wife shared with their sons:

We take them to the park, nearly every other day they go to town, they're always out, they love it out, they're used to it.

The interests which the children were developing as a result of these individual and shared activities were, in all cases, supplemented and extended by the parents through the initiation of shared experiences which possessed an educational function related to

the development of specific skills associated with what parents perceived as important in school.

Parents as collaborative educators.

Generally the parents were keen observers of their children and recorded mentally the skills which they were developing or not as the case may be. Mrs Hussein described this process of closely observing Tariq's growing interest in the world around him:

The thing I found about him was that when we were walking in the road, even sitting in the pushchair he was asking me questions all the time, "What colour is this car?" Even if it was cars, car colours and we were talking and I think that's how his vocabulary, his knowledge of the colours (developed). If he was going to toilet and we had an upstairs toilet he used to count the stairs all the time so that's how his numbers came about so he was doing things and learning things at the same time.

For the parents their level of direct involvement was related to their own self-confidence. Iqbal's mother, by means of her own professional experience as a qualified teacher in Pakistan, worked with specific activities with her two sons just as Rushan's mother had already taught him his initial sounds so that he could play with his word computer. Balkis, on the other hand, by means of her close observations was deeply concerned about what she saw as Aisha's lack of academic progress and she considered that she needed advice in knowing how to help her daughter and to develop her interest in more formal skills:

Sometime when I'm cooking she likes to get a chair and see what I'm doing like cutting onion or sometime she'll peel the skin off garlic. No she's been interested in what I've been doing, not that she wasn't before, before she's been playing with her own stuff, I've been trying to teach her to write, like her name but no, she doesn't want to know...Well my friend goes, "Start rough like,

writing out a letter and then letting her colour it in just to introduce her to the letters and she'll start solving it that way."

All the parents recognised the importance of stories in the lives of their children and in every home there was interaction with stories and books whether introduced by the parents themselves or by older sisters or brothers. For example, Iqbal, Jabidul, Tariq, Aditya and Rushan were read stories by their mothers on a regular basis. On the other hand Naveen, Aisha and Attia shared oral stories with their mothers and it is significant that where written or oral stories were shared with adults they were with the mothers.

Some children, however, generally relied on older sisters and brothers for the experience of books and stories. This was usually because those children had brought books from school and were reading them for enjoyment. Zeeshad had to rely entirely on his older brothers for books as he did not have any of his own and his parents did not share books with him. Balkis, on the other hand, although she told and read stories to Aisha, relied also on her older daughters to share books with their younger sister, an occupation which Balkis had observed closely:

When my daughters come back from school and they're reading their books with them she'll sit down and she'll watch and she'll try and see if she can say it, she's sort of memorising it. She's having a look and she's having a look at the pictures as well, so she thinks she can understand what's happening.

The languages and cultural forms of the stories and books used by the parents varied. Books, with the exception of those used by Jabidul's mother which were in Urdu, were in English and reflected the same cultural background, including those used by Mrs Mousaf with Rushan which after reading them to him in English she would then translate into Bengali. Stories told orally would also generally be in English and where they were traditional stories these would usually be stories and nursery rhymes also from the same cultural source. The exception to this was Mrs Islam who would make a

point of telling stories to Attia in Bengali. Interestingly she was also visiting Attia's school once a week to tell Bengali stories to groups of children.

Only Mr and Mrs Mousaf made a point of setting aside time to talk with their child although most parents did mention that they talked together as a family about day to day issues. Other activities which parents were involved in with their children consisted mainly of teaching their children initial sounds of the alphabet or simple number work such as recognition of early numbers.

It can be seen, therefore, that the attention which, on the whole, parents gave to their children's development reflected, through a close attention to providing them with a wide body of experiences, a desire to further their achievement and to see them gain a maximum benefit from their education. The parents could be seen to perceive themselves as active agents in this process and the activities with which they engaged their children reflected a desire to parallel what they believed as having status in school, emulating either what they themselves had experienced educationally or what they had seen at school with their older children. It represented also a genuine attempt by parents to engage with what they viewed as the educational culture of the nursery and to parallel that culture in their activities at home, for example, the sharing of books and the telling of stories. It is significant in this context to note the number of instances in which these stories came from and reflected an anglicised culture. Some parents, for example, Reena and Balkis, who had been born and educated in this country explained that they did not know any traditional stories from their own cultures. It is possible that this reflected their own experience of a culture specific educational system, as well as for other parents the predominance of anglicised stories in society as a whole, including bookshops, libraries and ultimately, their children's nurseries.

As their children entered the nursery and engaged with its provision and educational culture, opportunities were created for parents to experience for themselves and their children the influences which would be brought to bear by the settings on the lives of their children.

Early Experiences of the Nursery.

These influences which the nurseries exercised presented a picture of divergent responses, depending on the parents' individual experiences, especially mothers as the main carers. As their children entered the nursery for the first time, the experience for mothers of handing over their children to the settings led to personal tensions arising from their roles as parents and women. Where there were systems in place, as at Bridge, to give opportunities through the mothers' and toddlers' group for mothers to establish meaningful links with their children's settings a process of personal establishment was possible. Where those and other links, involving an active role for parents in the life and work of the settings, did not exist, then educational, personal and cultural tensions arose for parents, as exemplified by the sense of inadequacy and loss of personal control and influence experienced by some of the mothers as their children entered the nursery. It is to these experiences that I now turn.

The development of parents' personal identities.

The new relationships with the nurseries could, with the support of the settings, represent positive experiences for some mothers. These experiences represented a status passage for them (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.85) whereby there was a movement beyond the family into a more public world of interaction with others, leading in its turn to a growth and awareness of personal skills as well as a feeling of confidence. For Balkis, the nursery represented just such a status passage for her as a woman whereby, through the encouragement of the school and another parent, she had moved beyond her isolation as a mother at home to take an active part in the mothers' and toddlers' group at the nursery. This same status passage led her to establish for herself a personal identity which, in its turn, gave her a sense of momentum represented by her newly found access to friends and mutual support systems beyond her immediate family and cultural community:

I just like getting involved. At the beginning when I first went to the nursery Aleena kept saying, "Come around, come around", but then after a couple of weeks I went and I've enjoyed it, we do fund raising as well, we (get) involved in the fund raising which is really good. I go in about a quarter past ten, I go in half an hour early and I just have a look around just sit down, look at what the children are doing, you know, which Rosalind doesn't mind. I like making new friends as well. Since I went to the toddler group I had Pat Mattu living round the corner. When I was pregnant with him again I had a very difficult time so she went to pick up the children from school, dropping them off which was really helpful.

Aleena, in her turn, was encouraged by the school to fulfil her own aspirations. Ever since Amar began at the nursery she had visited regularly and had herself been active in the mothers' and toddlers' group. For her that same way into an alternative personal environment which she had been encouraged to enter by the school not only enabled her to experience a sense of acceptance but also helped her, despite the obstacles put in her way by her familial responsibilities, to decide to move forward by carving out a career as a trainee nursery nurse justifying it also as a contribution to her family:

Now the children have grown up I want to do something to be independent a little bit, to be able to go out to work and really contribute to the family income, to be able to go out with the children without a worry about the mother-in-law because she's homebound literally. I think this is something I wanted to do, well I had to do, not only for myself but for the children as well.

In the same way, Mrs Ali (Iqbal's mother) represented this duality between familial obligations and the desire to use her teaching qualifications to give herself a personal sense of purpose. As a result she began working as well as attending professional courses and in her role as a qualified teacher she was actively participating in the education of her two sons by means of a methodology she hoped would be reflected in

the work of the nursery. Her training gave her a feeling of professional certainty in herself which, however, her husband told me he was unable to share:

She makes little patterns of numbers, she's getting him ready, make him learn like one, two, three, four, he knows how to count and stuff like that, slowly, slowly, she's doing it anyway so they won't lose out in that way. My wife says that she hopes that if they start these kind of things at the nursery - I know there's pros and cons, they're too young as well aren't they, maybe we're asking too much of them to start them off too early, maybe we're starting them off too young.

Status passages experienced by the mothers could take alternative forms, denying the sense of establishment represented by opportunities for personal development. Such negative experiences could be a feature of the mothers' handing over of their children to the settings. As a result, personal tensions could be created between what mothers up to that point had viewed as their particular responsibility and source of status as carers and the way in which they now had to share that responsibility and status with others.

The loss of parental influence and status.

For all mothers there was a strong personal investment in their children's nurseries because they viewed them as a substantial support for themselves as well as their children. However, viewing the settings in this way led on occasions to a feeling, expressed either explicitly or implicitly, of personal inadequacy or loss as they adjusted to a pattern of care at school controlled by adults other than themselves. Hutt et al emphasise this experience:

For many parents, the entry of their child into the pre-school is the first time that they have placed his care and development into the hands of another person, even if there is an understanding that this is a new partnership that they are entering into. This step marks a change in their relationship with their child and a fresh relationship with a group of adults, the pre-school staff (1989, p.153)

The sense of inadequacy and loss experienced by some of the mothers formed a particularly keenly felt status passage for them, accentuating at times a sense of inadequacy already being undergone as they struggled to cope with their familial responsibilities. For these mothers the limitations to their very functions revealed by their children's nursery experiences could lead to a feeling of marginality in which their corresponding feelings of failure were strong. Gita, because she had a full-time job and a developing physical illness, was unable to give Aditya the kind of attention she would like. As a result, she relied on the nursery to support her in her concerns about her daughter's behaviour and academic progress but this same reliance accentuated the nursery's apparent success with Aditya, adding to Gita's sense of her own shortcomings as a mother:

I've never stopped them from doing things or deprived them of things, they've always had paints and things I think they've got more than anybody else, but because I haven't got the time to sit with them, I wish I had, and I just haven't got the patience either I just feel that someone who knows what they're doing and can sit them down. This is what amazes me, when I go to collect her Rosalind says, "She's been fine, she's all right", but when I take her out shopping she's all over the place, I can't keep up with her.

A sense of personal inadequacy could lead also to a heightened sense of personal responsibility. For Balkis her concerns that Aisha was only interested in playing at nursery and at home caused a breach between her anticipation of what the nursery would provide Aisha with and the reality. But, in Balkis's case this disappointment led to a sense of personal guilt in which she felt that, after all, the partnership she had sought with the school involved a level of personal commitment and responsibility from her which she had failed to fulfil:

I've seen her at nursery, she's always playing with bangles in the corner, like she plays with the telephone, she'll do painting, drawing, they'll tell her a story

as well. In a way I feel I should be sort of teaching her to write and ABC 'cos they have enough work in the nursery.

For Reena, her personal experience of her son starting school was a difficult and depressing time for her, resulting in feelings of personal helplessness as she had had to stay with Sonny in school each afternoon during his first term. Her feelings of helplessness and lack of support were reflected at that time in her attitude to the nursery:

I think they just play there, they just do what they want to do. I think, um, he started in September, I've been with him all that time and he hasn't got used to that place yet. I think if the teachers gave a bit more attention he probably would've stayed there now, but, right, they do, they are doing their best but, like, he doesn't seem to get used to the place, I mean, I don't know.

For Reena the period of time she was forced to spend with her son provided another instance of the experience of a status passage, requiring a change in her role as a carer during which she had to develop her own patience and fortitude within an environment in which as a mother she felt marginalised and was facing a crisis in her influence and sense of control in her relationship with her child. During the term in which Reena stayed with Sonny in school she began to share picture books with individual children and later with small groups, sometimes in Panjabi. By this means her status passage took on a new characteristic in which she became an educator, growing in confidence and playing an active role in the work of the nursery, using her skills as a bilingual adult. Significantly, after she was able to leave Sonny she was not invited back to the setting to continue and develop these activities with the children.

The transition from home to nursery could result also in a sense of loss as for example with Mrs Jain, especially as Naveen, on his initial visit to the nursery, was happy to embrace his new environment:

...since he's born I've never really left him and it's really, really, looking at him my heart was like, he was wandering around and playing, like, I was the one

with the tears in my eyes, not him...I didn't want no negativity to rub off on him and I was trying make him all enthusiastic, encourage him. In no way would I say to him, "Oh Naveen I feel", it's like, "Mummy's really happy for you darling", and all the rest of it. Even though inside it's a different story.

The feelings of inadequacy and loss felt by some of the mothers, as well as those instances of the growth of confidence and skills, emphasised the overriding influence which the nurseries brought to bear from the beginning, making the transition from home to school for the parents particularly significant. This influence, in its turn, was brought to bear also on the children, creating the beginning of a process which presented the culture of the nurseries as a dominant experience in the children's lives, as they moved from the influence of their primary carers which up to now had been their only experience (Woods, 1990b, p.145) to the new and secondary socialisation of the nurseries in which they were learning alternative skills.

Parents' views of early influences on the children.

The embracement of the culture of the school was an aspect of the children's early experiences of the nursery which the parents consistently noted. One way, discussed below, was the manner in which the pattern of children's language altered. Another was the way their children often re-enacted activities and relationships which they had established as a normal pattern at nursery. Mrs Ali described how Iqbal had become absorbed in his life at school and the influence it was coming to represent:

When he's doing anything in school similar he does like this he says, "I done this in school, I will make this cake like this". When we make cake he wants to help me. At home when he plays with his toys he's talking himself like his friends when he's doing things, and his other friends in nursery he imagines he's playing with them.

For Rushan the experience of the nursery took the form of observing and re-enacting the role which he had seen the teacher play from day to day:

Sometimes he get his book and he make up stories and just like one of the teachers do at school he'll pretend that there's some kids sitting there and he'll get the book and start reading the story out, but he can't read the words but he makes it up.

In contrast the culture of the nursery represented for Balkis a negative influence on Aisha, counteracting the efforts which she was making at home to develop her daughter's skills:

She likes playing with the dolls, she'll just like playing with her necklaces, bangles, you know, dressing up which she likes which she does at nursery. I've been trying to teach her to do her ABC, writing her name but she's not interested, what she wants to do is play with dolls.

One of the important ways in which the culture of the nurseries became dominant at the expense of the home cultures was the way in which the children's use of English began to predominate at the expense of their community languages. This growing predominance became a symbol of the unresolvable tensions which existed, as a result of the parents' engagement with the nurseries, between the desire to recognise the importance of English as a pathway to achievement in society and the loss of familial and community cultural identity that that predominance represented. It is this changing balance and its effect on the families which I will now examine.

The Development of Tensions Between Home and Nursery.

For some parents English represented an icon of achievement with which they and their children needed to engage. For Balkis who spoke both Urdu and English with her children and whose anxieties centred around Aisha's academic progress the emergence of English as a more actively used language by both her daughters at home had its positive aspects although at the same time she wanted Aisha to retain a willingness to use her community language:

I've been speaking with them in my own language, they've been answering back, now they're speaking more English which I prefer, you know they'll pick up our own language later on as well. I'd like her to have a conversation with me sometime in our language but it's always in English.

Mr Dhariwal was adamant that he wanted all his children, including Zeeshad, to learn English at school to the exclusion of all other languages. In this case both he and his wife lacked confidence with their English. In addition, Mr Dhariwal had been unemployed since 1992. He was attending English classes locally and it is possible he saw his lack of English as a stumbling block to employment in the period since he had been made redundant.

Both Reena and Gita also noted the increase which had taken place in their children's use of English at home. Reena noticed that Sonny's English was improving and that he tended to answer her in that language rather than Panjabi, despite the fact that she still made a conscious effort to translate stories into Panjabi when she read to him. Gita's experience was similar and reflected the tensions which she and Reena experienced as they attempted to embrace English and at the same time assert the validity of their community language. Gita felt positive about the fact that Aditya's English was improving and in fact she wanted Aditya to have more experience of English at nursery:

She's quite fluent at Panjabi, she's very good actually but just recently since she's been going to full-time nursery she's really improved her English which I'm really shocked. I'd rather she got a lot more English at school than she has, she's Asian I feel she needs to be taught early stage English.

As with Balkis the need to encourage the development of English arose from Gita's anxiety for Aditya's academic progress at her nursery. At the same time Gita emphasised her conviction that Panjabi should remain a major familial and cultural language at home:

They're at school all the time and they're learning English there so I like them to switch off a bit when they're at home so they can relate to their own speech and start speaking to me in Panjabi so they don't lose it.

Mrs Ali (Iqbal's mother) exemplified the tensions which existed between engagement and preservation of culture. She affirmed the need for her children to learn and use English, "But in this country we need English," and she made her own contribution to this need asserting at the same time the power which her own community language possessed for her:

I tell him stories in English but when he doesn't understand I tell him in my own language and then he understands.

But as Iqbal developed his confidence in English at nursery and used it more and more she experienced that feeling of her own culture slipping away from her control:

At home I don't like English because I want they speak Urdu at home and at school English. Saturday I always remind them, "Today we are not going school so please talk Urdu today". Sometime they speak little bit then again they start speaking English.

At the same time Mrs Ali expressed her disappointment that Iqbal was speaking English almost exclusively at nursery and she would have liked him to have the opportunity there to be able to speak more in Urdu and Panjabi. Even for Mr Ali there was a recognition that the balance was altering between English and community languages and that he and his wife needed to redress that balance at home:

At home probably what me and my wife would tend to do is speak to him more and more in Panjabi. They do understand what everybody says to them in Panjabi, it's just that when they're at school they talk a lot more than what they do at home with their friends and everything, so the reply they give you is in English.

Aleena also regretted the embracement of English by her children, including Amar, to the exclusion of Panjabi:

I speak to them in Panjabi but they won't answer me back because they don't know how to use it. Unfortunately, it's something I didn't want to happen. When I used to see it in somebody else's children, I used to think that's wrong.

This consistent emphasis by the parents of the growing predominance of their children's use of English provided examples of the way in which it could be suggested that their community languages possessed a lower status within the nursery settings. In this way the experiences of the parents in relation to the cultural influence of their children's schools and the tensions created as a consequence led to what was viewed as the necessity for an affirmation of their cultures and languages, an assertion that their familial and community lives possessed validity, above all, for them and their children. It is the nature of this assertion that I will now examine.

The Affirmation of Community Languages.

The separate development of community languages and English.

For some parents the resolution of the tensions between two cultures represented by English and their community language was to view both languages as having different purposes and in consequence being linguistically unconnected, a view not shared by contemporary research into the close developmental relationship between languages which I examined in the previous chapter (Siraj-Blatchford, 1994, p.46; Wiles, 1985, p.91; David, 1990, p.65). However, for these parents the languages did not move in parallel but instead developed separately depending on their function. Aleena exemplified this view:

First comes Panjabi then your English because the English is going to be around you all your life and you'll pick it up just like that. The Panjabi aspect of it

doesn't, doesn't come into it 'til you're at home and unless you've got a non-English speaker and that's when your Panjabi comes in.

In the view of Mrs Mousaf this separation of languages avoided the danger of confusion:

The first word he learned is our language, so I don't think he would be confused because we made it clear to him, "You're not speaking one minute English at home", and next minute when he's mature enough starts speaking his own lingo. That's when the kids gets confused.

Community languages as social communication.

For many parents the power and validity of their community languages were asserted in their use as a source of familial and social communitas (Woods, 1993, p.6) which arose from a shared language acting as an important means of communication and meaning making. For Reena, Aleena and Mr and Mrs Mousaf this shared language became a necessity. Rushan would need to communicate with his paternal grandmother when he visited Bangladesh. Both Sonny and Amar needed to be able to speak Panjabi in order to understand their own grandmothers who lived with them. For Aleena this necessity emphasised her frustration at what she saw as her children's lack of skill in their community language:

They try to speak Panjabi with her, not very well, but they know she's the only Panjabi speaker, totally Panjabi speaker in the house and they speak Panjabi although it's not as fluent as it should be.

This sharing of language as a communicative necessity could lead to an awareness of how the knowledge of different languages could be applied appropriately, depending on the audience. Mrs Hussein described how Tariq had, no doubt through hers and her husband's influence, developed a natural respect for his community language so that as

part of his identity as a bilingual learner he had begun to understand its appropriateness of use and its relevance to his familial and social relationships:

If he knew that somebody couldn't speak English he'd just talk to them in Panjabi and that's it. I don't know how he senses that or picks it up but if I told him, say, we were going somewhere once and we were in the car and we told him to speak in Panjabi but he would not do it for us because we told him to, he'll do it because he wants to. Say, my parents who can't speak much English, he'll automatically talk to them in Panjabi. Say, there was a certain word he knew in Panjabi and didn't know it in English even when he's speaking in English he'll use that Panjabi word in it.

Mrs. Mousaf described the social consequences of the failure of other families to encourage their own children to speak their community languages:

That is one thing we decided when Rushan was born, I and my husband, because we're seeing the kids that parents bring them up to speak English at home and not their own lingo, these kids when they go out in the community or with relatives they can't communicate because all the kids speak our language, and the other kids will name them as dumb, but they're not dumb, it's just that they can't speak it. So it's not their fault, it's the parents' fault.

In this way community languages were represented as being of practical importance in the social lives of their users.

Community languages as a confirmation of culture.

The use of community languages provided a source of identity which, within English society, served as a concrete means of community expression as well as establishing familial and social continuity between members of that same community. Reena was clear in her own mind that she wanted Sonny to be able to speak Panjabi because of its

cultural significance, “because it’s our language” as she put it. Aleena expressed this idea of language as an affirmation of culture in similar terms:

We’re Asians, we’re Indians, we ought to be speaking our own language really.

This is why Amar’s rejection of Panjabi in the face of the influence of English represented for Aleena a refusal to embrace so much of what she considered culturally significant:

He’ll laugh or he’ll start hitting me and saying no. He knows it’s Panjabi and he knows I want him to speak it but he won’t.

For Mrs. Mousaf the consequence also of Rushan’s failure to develop his own community language would be his alienation from his familial and social roots:

End of the day we all have to go back to our own countries or visit relations and I don’t want them to turn round and say, “Ah, he’s British, you know”. This is what they will say if he start speaking English down there without knowing their own culture.

Gita, despite her own anxieties about Aditya’s academic progress and her recognition of the need to engage with the culture and language of the nursery, was nevertheless firm in her personal identification with her own language and its significance for her and her family:

It’s quite important that she should learn her own mother tongue as well because no matter what, she’ll still be Asian and she’ll still be Indian although we might study English and we’re probably in the Western world even then you can’t lose your own culture and that’s the way I’ve been brought up.

The emphasis on the affirmation of language for many parents was not sufficient on its own as a means of asserting cultural identity. For those same parents culture was

represented also in the familial and social relationships that went to make up their communities.

The Affirmation of Cultural Identity.

For some of the mothers the affirmation of their cultural identity was a complex and often contradictory experience, as exemplified by Reena and Aleena, who had already described the importance to their identities of their community languages. Reena came from Birmingham to her husband's house on her marriage to live with her in-laws. Her sister and her sister and brother-in-law were living with the family also. Reena had a baby whom her sister looked after while she looked after Sonny. Reena viewed the family as a network through which she was gaining considerable support and in this way her experience of the family was positive. However, within this closely structured network she was at the same time isolated from her peers because she left her own parents and friends in Birmingham. Although she was able to visit her parents she had no personal friends in the town. For Aleena the experience of forging a career for herself had created a difficult relationship with her mother-in-law and her husband's family:

I've always had problems with my mother-in-law because she's elderly and I'm supposed to be at home looking after her and everything. If we want to go out as a family we're not able to because I've always got to have my daughter at home and now my son's a little older so he can stay with her for a little while and that's created problems because her daughter also lives in the town so there's interference from them, saying things like, "Where's Mum? where's Mum?" very politely, but you know what she's thinking. And at one point it gets so irritating sometimes I answered back to her and I said, "Well I haven't left her on her own you know, there's somebody there with her". So there's always that in the air.

Despite their personal difficulties and frustrations arising from the far from straightforward familial relationships built around responsibility and status both Reena and Aleena had described their community and familial cultures as personal identifiers. Mr and Mrs Mousaf, however, possessed no personal doubts about the positive role of the family. At the same time as Mrs Mousaf discussed the problems of changing attitudes in the outside world the family was viewed as a source of strength and the reinforcement of positive attitudes, provided it was recognised as such by its members:

Same as at home, if everybody sets the same rule and same standard then the street would be cleaned up as well. I mean, parents, obviously they don't mind if the kids out 'til ten or eleven at night in the street, this is not right, they shouldn't be, they should be at home with their parents.

To a large extent these views possess a universality in which parents of all cultures are concerned to retain the integrity of their familial and social lives in the face of exterior challenges. However, the families interviewed were possessed of alternative cultures against which several of them were able to compare and confront what they viewed as the failures of English society. For example, the breakdown in values which Mrs Mousaf viewed around her was offset by the values which she maintained still existed in Bangladesh. She represented these values as being the need for Rushan to develop his Bengali and to learn the standards of his own culture:

I would take him back when he mature enough, when about eight or nine that he really know what's coming and maybe stay there year or two to pick up the culture properly like respecting the elders, how to behave because here, no offence, but there's no respect. You know, when you go to a shop if there's an elderly person waiting you let them go first, but now the youngsters will just pick the mick out of them and push them and go first.

This direct comparison between what was viewed as the negative influence of English society and the traditional values of the parents' culture was reinforced by Mrs Hussein

when she made the same cultural comparison through the medium of a mother whom she had seen at the nursery and with whom she went to school before Mrs Hussein was sent back to Pakistan for her secondary education:

We used to live on the same road but she doesn't recognise me now, she was about Tariq's age then and I was about eight, nine. Looking at her and myself we're two different people because we've gone through different lifestyles, different education systems and that's partly the reason, so living in England is not too bad in the sense that you've got your privacy, you can manoeuvre a bit more whereas if we were in Pakistan we would stay where our parents' or our grandparents' land is and you don't manoeuvre so much so that's about all. The rest, say, women's status are I'd be free there, I'd have a lot more freedom to move, to integrate with the family. Here, you know, you're isolated in nuclear families, you're not extended families, there I'd have the experience of the extended family.

Ultimately, just as individual mothers had attempted to carve out a personal role for themselves, so the possession of a shared culture built on strong social and familial ties and expressed through the media of language and relationships had created another form of unity which gave the parents a clear sense of purpose. For some mothers this *communitas* could be restrictive and place overwhelming responsibilities on them leading to their personal isolation but it also gave them another kind of identity founded on a sense of a shared culture. This aspect of the parents' cultures was described by Mrs Hussein:

That's our identity, that's our inheritance otherwise if we didn't have the culture, the language what are we then? We'll be deprived of everything, we're not going to have anything, we're not going to have our identity, so our identity is very important to us, the way you dress, the way you live your daily life, it's very, very important.

Conclusion.

The picture presented by the interviews with the parents is of a group of people with very common concerns despite their diversity of backgrounds and cultures. These concerns included not only the establishment of an individual status and identity for their children but also a conviction that their children had to succeed at nursery and school in order to be able to contribute towards that same sense of identity and achievement. However, herein lay a number of issues affecting the lives of the children and their parents which created tensions in their relationships with the nursery settings.

It was seen that an important tension arose from the experience of the introduction by mothers of the children to the nurseries which provided a strong and potentially overwhelming alternative culture. This was represented through the experiences of the parents in two ways. In the first instance, despite the support given to some mothers at Bridge by means of the mothers' and toddlers' group, a number of mothers at both nurseries experienced feelings of inadequacy and loss arising from their status passage as parents and carers. This represented potentially the experience of any parent moving with their child into the nursery environment, and exemplified the gap which could be created by a lack of appreciation by settings of the consequences of such a transitional process and the support which parents also might need:

For both parents and child, it would seem that the response of the pre-school to the delicate and sensitive initial period of entry into the new environment is potentially of crucial importance (Hutt et al, 1989, p.154).

However, what made this experience of transition particularly acute for the parents was the way in which the growing influence of the nurseries was exemplified by an increasing dominance of the use of English by the children over their community languages. The development of their children's competence in English was viewed by the parents as of extreme importance. English was considered to be an icon of achievement in society and no parent rejected that. The consequence, however, was that

in relation to this embracement of English a substantial cultural penalty was being paid in that the children's community languages were losing their influence and significance for them. There was not a sense of continuity and inclusiveness in how the parents described the relationship culturally between home and school and language represented a symbol of this discontinuity, a discontinuity which in relation to the powerful influence of the cultures of the nurseries was unresolvable for the parents. This possessed the potential of driving a wedge between home and school whereby parents sought a solution by withdrawing their own cultures and giving them meaning within the confines of their own immediate communities. This was exemplified by Iqbal's father's description of his and his wife's dissemination of cultural knowledge to their sons:

They will be taught that from the house, from the mother and father, about our culture, about our religion and everything.

Language emerged as a central issue of identity and achievement in the interviews with the parents. It also represented, in the form of English, a route to progress and attainment, recognised by the parents in their desire for their children to develop proficiency in it. It also, in the form of community languages, represented a means of communication between community members and also a way in which cultural identity was asserted. It could be argued that in the context of the language of social and educational achievement there was a sense in which the children's development of English in the nurseries at the expense of their community languages meant that English represented the predominant language of achievement in the settings.

I described, however, the potential contribution which the parents could be making to the life and work of the nurseries. I emphasised, through their diversity of familial and educational experiences, the cultural and linguistic knowledge which the parents possessed. I also described the ways in which parents engaged with their children socially and educationally and through the community languages which were shared at home. This variety of shared experiences represented a substantial store not only of the

parents' knowledge of their own cultures and their personal education of their children, but also of the children's extensive "prior knowledge" (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p.118) which had been constructed from their relationships with their families.

In Chapter 6 I will return directly to my findings arising from the views of the parents to examine the potential benefits for both parents and the schools of closer relationships. However in relation to the discontinuity experienced by the parents in relation to their cultures and languages I will now turn in the next chapter to an examination of the views and practices of the educators in relation to their pedagogies and their treatment of cultural and language diversity in their settings.

Chapter 5: Creative Teaching and Learning and their Constraints: Teachers' Ideas in Policy and Practice.

Introduction.

In the previous chapter in which I examined the views of the parents I highlighted the tensions which existed for them between their educational aspirations for their children to succeed at school and their desire for an assertion of a personal identity founded on their community cultures and languages. The resultant implied discontinuity between home and school emphasises the importance of examining the attitudes of the schools towards issues of education as they affected their bilingual learners. This examination of policy and practice will form the subject of this chapter.

I will begin by establishing my intended examination of the educators' policies and practices within the framework of the features of what has been described as a creative approach to teaching and learning (Woods, 1990a, 1993, 1995 and Woods and Jeffrey, 1996). I will suggest that this approach to policy and practice in the settings emerges from the principles of a social-constructivist theory of learning which I described in Chapter 3. Also, I will consider briefly the potential constraints on teachers' creativity which have occurred as a result of legislation in recent years and teachers' responses to them. I will then examine policy and practice in the settings in the context of the characteristics of creative teaching and learning suggested by Woods (1990a) describing the extent to which the educators in the settings fulfilled the requirements of these characteristics. I will also suggest that two additional features of creative teaching and learning: opportunity, and growth and development, need to be examined also in this context. I will argue in the chapter that although there are examples of creative teaching and learning in the two settings, there are, nevertheless, serious shortcomings in this respect arising firstly from particular teaching strategies and secondly from a lack of planning and provision in the curriculum for cultural and language diversity. I will suggest that as a result of these shortcomings the settings are failing to provide a

relevant and developmental environment for their bilingual learners, the result of which is that the substantial skills and knowledge which they possess are being excluded from the culture and curriculum of each school.

Creative Teaching and Learning.

In Chapter 3 I described contemporary educational ideas which represented a social-constructivist model of early years teaching and learning. This model is based on the relationship between the child's learning developing both from an active involvement with her environment through the medium of play and the active role which the adult plays in developing the child's knowledge through a process of collaboration in which the adult becomes "an enabler, a facilitator, one who has to be alive to the shifts and turns in pupils' thinking and to its cultural supports, and to encourage the pupil to build on his or her relevances" (Woods, 1990a, p.30). It has been suggested that where, in this way, teachers actively manifest particular qualities in their ideas and practices which provide means by which children are enabled to advance their knowledge and understanding then they are teaching creatively (Woods, 1990a, 1995; Woods and Jeffrey, 1996). This mode of teaching, Woods (1990a, p.32) argues can be characterised by four qualities: innovation, ownership, control and relevance. Innovative teachers are those who find flexible and adaptive ways of applying their philosophies and methodologies to the different situations they find in the classroom. In this sense they are inventive in their work with children (Jeffrey and Woods, 1997, p.15), are flexible and responsive to opportunities for teaching and learning which arise in the classroom, applying appropriate methods of teaching as part of the process (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p.6). In this way innovation can be planned or serendipitous (Woods, 1995, p.1). In order to be innovative, creative teachers possess a conviction and commitment to their pedagogies. In this way they own their ideas and practices, not merely fulfilling the requirements of others (Jeffrey and Woods, 1997, p.15), although ownership may include some form of adaptation of the ideas of others (Woods, 1995, p.1). As well as ownership of pedagogy the creative teacher controls

the processes in order to apply flexible and adaptive methods to what she views as the particular needs of the children (Jeffrey and Woods, 1997, p.15). It has been suggested also that innovation, ownership and control need to be applied within a framework of relevance of the knowledge being taught to children (ibid, p.16). In this way knowledge is meaningful to children, reflecting the society in which they live and their particular cultures (ibid, p.15). It has also been argued that “creative teaching promotes creative learning” (Woods, 1995, p.2) in which similar qualities are observed:

There is innovation - pupils are changed in some way, often radically...In this mode, pupils have control over their own learning processes, and ownership of the knowledge produced, which is relevant to their concerns (ibid, p.2).

The important aspect in this correspondence is that there is a transfer to the child of the very qualities which constitute the experience of creative teaching. It can be argued that the characteristics of creative teaching and learning are of particular relevance to the policies and practices of early years settings. It can be maintained that these characteristics represent a critical approach to the development of educational achievement, moving beyond the attainment of specific objectives which for the child “have little intrinsic appeal” (Eisner, 1985, p.89) to embrace, instead, the idea of “connoisseurship” which develops where teachers are enabled to examine and think about what they do (ibid, p.104). This idea of thinking about the nature and purposes of their teaching in relation to their pupils suggests a more creative approach to ways of teaching than those which objectify and quantify knowledge (Woods, 1996, p.21) or those which on their own rely on “incremental theories of knowing, involving the gradual, cumulative acquisition of knowledge and skills”, as useful in some circumstances as this approach may be (ibid, p.28). Instead, connoisseurship relies on approaches to thinking about pedagogy which develop the creative and holistic aspects of children’s learning. Woods (ibid, p.25) describes Best’s description of these aspects of learning contained as they are within a “Personal Enquiry” approach and which “involves developing qualities such as ‘curiosity, originality, initiative, co-operation,

perseverance, open-mindedness, self-criticism, responsibility, self-confidence and independence' (1991, p.275)". Many of these features form a link between the social-constructivist theory of learning as applied to early years settings and the characteristics of creative teaching and learning. For example, this link can be represented in free play by the potential for the development of curiosity, initiative and responsibility through the process of exploration and the setting by children of their own goals (David, 1992, p.78) as well as developing self-confidence and independence as they gain ownership of their own learning by means of exploration and experimentation in the nursery environment. In collaboration with others the potential exists to develop skills of perseverance in times of "struggle" (Bruce, 1991, p.84) and co-operation with peers and adults. In this way it can be argued that the links between early years theory and the principles of creative teaching and learning can be established.

Intensification as a Constraint on Creative Teaching and Learning.

Of fundamental importance in the process of creative teaching and learning is the extent to which the educator is able to manifest a flexible and adaptive approach to her pedagogy. Part of the pressure for some form of adaptation has arisen from the external demands arising from educational legislation which in the last ten years has not only led to an intensification of teachers' work but has sought to place constraints on their freedom of choice (Woods, 1995, p.3). It has been suggested that these constraints and increases in workload have involved not only more extensive classroom planning arising from a centrally imposed curriculum, but also from an increase in those administrative and assessment tasks with which teachers are obliged to engage beyond the classroom (Hargreaves, 1994, p.14; Woods, 1995, p.3). This proliferation has been described as a process of "intensification" (Apple, 1986, in Woods, 1995, p.3) in which teachers' workloads have, in their turn, led to a loss of spontaneity and an increase in stress (ibid. p.4). This has been viewed as making it more difficult for educators to focus on what they view as their professional roles as educators. In its turn, it has the potential to drive a wedge between the educators' beliefs and their ability

to transform those beliefs consistently into practice in their schools. These constraints have arisen from a number of educational statutes which have been designed to transform state education into a centralised, standardised and rationalised entity (ibid, p.3). These statutes have included the Education Reform Act (1989) which established a National Curriculum for all state primary and secondary schools, the development of local management of schools in which individual schools have become financially responsible for the management of most of their functions and The Education (Schools) Act (1992) of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) by whom all schools are obliged to be inspected every few years using Ofsted trained inspectors following standardised criteria for judging the quality of teaching in each school.

Although nursery education has not been subject to the same constraints as statutory schooling, they have been included in the Ofsted system of inspections and their traditional methodologies have been challenged by the publication by the former School Curriculum and Assessment Authority of Desirable Learning Outcomes which are intended as a suggested basis for a pre-statutory curriculum covering six areas of learning: Personal and Social Development; Language and Literacy; Mathematics; Knowledge and Understanding of the World; Physical Development; Creative Development. It is suggested in the document that children should have attained certain skills in these six areas by the time they leave pre-statutory provision at the age of five. The document has the potential of representing a more prescriptive curriculum bearing a much closer relationship to the National Curriculum. These proposals form the framework for the Ofsted system of inspection of pre-school settings. It is in this context that early years educators are having to work and maintain a sense of worth as well as commitment to the education of their pupils.

Teachers' Responses to Intensification.

The experience of deprofessionalisation.

Increases in responsibilities, especially in relation to administrative tasks led to a colonisation of the educators' time at the expense of their professional classroom-based perspectives (Hargreaves, 1994, p.113). The effect of this was that their work had become "more routinized and deskilled" (ibid, p.14). For Rosalind the predominance of what she saw as "low level tasks" impinged on and transformed her own professionalism into a job which had become deprofessionalised for her:

My view of the headship is that I spend a lot of time in low-level tasks, in answering the phone, saying that deliveries can be put here and signing for deliveries, that could be dealt with by somebody with no skills at all, or very few skills, certainly not paid the money I'm paid. So I'm dissatisfied with myself as a Head.

As co-ordinator of the nursery unit Jenni found herself having responsibility for tasks involving increasing amounts of paperwork and administration:

I do the waiting lists, normally I do the registering, a lot of the home visits I tend to do, and the records I have to do because I have the full responsibility. I have to do more extensive records that go to the school, I'm responsible for the actual continuation of the records into school.

In addition to the colonisation of their time the outside observations and judgements arising from the Ofsted form of inspection provided a challenge to the educators' philosophies and forms of management. As a result of such an inspection at Westside the school was praised. However, during the pre-inspection period Chris, the headteacher, expressed her resentment at this intended scrutiny and judgement on her role as a professional:

I just feel that there are people making judgements on us and may not be in a position to. There are very few people who don't do this job on a daily basis really don't have a leg to stand on. It's easy to come in and criticise, it's not what the school is about.

Outside challenges to personal commitment by the educators to their philosophies arose from colleagues who in effect represented negative reference groups (Nias, 1989, p.53) against whom it was necessary to express a contrastive rhetoric (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p.41) in which the educators' own ideas needed to be asserted, contrasting them with those of others. Rosalind, as an early years educator felt this about educators in other spheres of education:

It's very difficult to get the nursery message across that the curriculum's delivered through play, that we're doing very high level concepts, so all the time you're trying to explain these ideas to parents or even in practice to people in your own profession, to other teachers or even convince our own profession of our worth.

Forms of resistance to intensification.

The experience of deprofessionalisation, although it is strong and thereby emotionally and professionally debilitating, does represent only one of the set of experiences arising from the process of intensification. It has been argued (Hargreaves, 1994; Woods, 1995) that the growth in the responsibilities in the last few years has possessed the potential to add to teachers' sense of professionalism in many respects and has enabled them to affirm a commitment to their professional roles. In order to do so they have developed strategies which form an attempt to resist and overcome the restraints bearing on them and to assert a set of working principles which allow them to play a more creative role within the school setting. In order to focus on the creative elements of the educators' work, it is to these strategies that I now turn.

The educators in the study used a variety of strategies to assert their commitment to their pedagogies. One set of strategies arose from different degrees of resistance to the changes imposed on them. Out of the careers and experiences of individual educators emerges what Pollard describes as opinions about the "right" way to teach, investing those opinions with much of their "self-identity" (Pollard, 1980, quoted in Woods, 1995, p.138). Nias (1989, p.203) describes these opinions as forming the teacher's "substantial self", representing "a set of self-defining beliefs, values and attitudes...highly resistant to change." These beliefs form one of the ways in which the educators maintain their commitment, enabling them to attempt to resist the process of deprofessionalisation. This resistance can be a complete and uncompromising affirmation of the educator's educational philosophy. Rosalind, in describing the challenge to her pedagogy in the face of a future Ofsted inspection asserted that "we actually can't fall in with the Ofsted format in which we do not believe". Jenni also was prepared to assert her self-defining beliefs even in the face of contrary advice from the Ofsted inspectors:

I disagreed with that before so (if) the Ofsted report comes up and says this woman should be doing more worksheets with her four year olds I'd totally ignore it because I don't think I would want to do it.

In reality, however, the educators in the study experienced, to one degree or another, an adaptational approach to their educational ideas, forming a compromise or "strategic compliance" (Lacey and Lamont, 1977, p.24) by which they set out to work within the framework set by the intensification of their jobs. Strategic compliance is represented by the attempt to find a working balance between the requirements of the school setting and the demands of outside agencies. This attempt emphasises the "competing imperatives" which form part of the educator's professional role (Alexander, 1995, p.23). For the educators in this study these imperatives were represented by conflicting value-related issues (ibid, p.23) exemplified by personal as opposed to centrally imposed models of professionalism. For example, Chris was prepared to take a more

pragmatic view towards practice and management although she still asserted the right to feel strongly about some educational issues:

There are some issues we can't contribute to because we're still learning about that, some issues we feel passionately about and then some issues we just think let it go. One of the things Ofsted has done for us is to ask very searching questions about policy and practice and I think that's good.

A further way in which resistance can flourish is by means of the development of systems of mutual co-operation between members of staff where managers and educators work together as a team in which each member is given status. This system of collaboration has been suggested (Hargreaves, 1994, p.186) as a means by which educators are able to bind together to support and develop their educational beliefs and methodologies. Such a process of collaboration is "characterised by strong self-determination and accord on values" (Woods, 1995, p.19) and at its strongest can become a "culture of collaboration" within a school, establishing "a set of norms about ways of behaving, perceiving and understanding underpinned by jointly held beliefs and values" (Nias et al, 1992, p.2). Collaborative cultures can be viewed as contributing towards reducing teacher uncertainty (Hargreaves, 1994, p.17) as well as facilitating teacher and pupil development.

Jenni's belief in a collaborative working relationship based on shared roles and decision making exemplified one aspect of the collegiality which is possible between a teacher and her nursery nurses. As a former nursery nurse herself she was particularly sensitive to their roles within the nursery:

I like working as a team, I think it's nice to have other people swapping ideas. It's as well everybody gets on quite well. I like it to be friendly...I think we all rely on each other, we all know that the other one is going to be in their particular area and that's the way it works, that's the strength of it.

Another way in which educators were able to re-establish their sense of professionalism was by means of the school inspection process itself, in its ability in favourable circumstances to enskill educators who had found the process a source of personal development and professional affirmation. As a result of the inspection at Westside Jenni felt "vindicated" and Chris felt that for the first time "I am doing my job" (Boyle, 1998).

In this way, the educators' responses to the experience of intensification could be seen to be a process of retaining their sense of professionalism in the form of a strategic adaptation (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p.1). As such their responses were part of a process of steering a course between "creativity and control...in a varying situation of constraint and opportunity" (ibid, p.2).

The issue for the educators was whether the constraints bearing upon them had restructured their view of their pedagogies or whether each of them was enabled to maintain her conviction and commitment in order to embrace the concept of creativity as an "extended professional" (Hoyle, 1980, quoted in Woods, 1995, p.42). I will explore this particular issue in the context of my examination of the characteristics of creative teaching and learning in the settings and it is these aspects of the policies and practices of the nurseries that I now examine.

Creative Teaching and Learning In the Two Settings.

I have already described above how it has been suggested that creative teaching and learning can be governed by similar principles (Woods, 1995, p.2) although it could be suggested that creative learning might also arise from other approaches. In this respect further research into creative teaching and learning could begin with a study of further characteristics which could contribute towards creative learning. However, for this study I will examine the four characteristics of creative teaching and learning suggested by Woods (1995): ownership, control, relevance, innovation and two additional characteristics which I have identified: opportunity, and growth and development of

knowledge. In isolation, not all of these particular characteristics of creative teaching have a direct bearing on their equivalent characteristics in creative learning although this will be seen to occur in certain respects, for instance in relevance and innovation. In the case of ownership and control, however, before embarking on the establishment of a curriculum and the teaching approaches appropriate to it, educators need to feel committed to that pedagogy and to be convinced that how they are teaching is the right way. In this way they need to feel a sense of personal ownership of their pedagogy. They also need to possess control over the processes they are instituting in order to appropriate the knowledge being taught as part of their pedagogical beliefs. Ownership and control by teachers of their pedagogies do not in themselves lead directly to ownership and control of learning by children. There needs to be the parallel presence and achievement of other aspects of creative teaching for these and other facets of creative learning to be accomplished. I will nevertheless be examining examples of these characteristics together because the nature of their experience is similar and they possess similar influences on the processes of teaching and learning.

Ownership.

Genuine ownership by teachers of their pedagogy is reflected not only in commitment and conviction but also in the way in which the particular pedagogy is applied, being based on a genuine clarity of understanding of what is being espoused. This element of ownership embraces what Alexander (1995, p.35) describes as the need for “intentionality” in which it is necessary for the educator to “have good reasons for working in a particular way” and that “practice can only be fully understood if one engages with the thinking that underlies it.”

Ownership of pedagogy at Bridge Nursery School.

Rosalind’s educational ideas were expressed by herself and through the policies of her school. She established, firstly, what she viewed as the general principles of early years education by means of her conviction that “the nursery exists for the benefit of the

children it serves and without the children we wouldn't be there." She was convinced that the job was about the strategies which informed what she described as "implicit subtle teaching" by which she meant a form of teaching in which the educator rather than acting as a direct imparter of knowledge becomes a facilitator, sensitive to the children's particular interests, providing a provision and personal input based on the development of those interests, a belief which echoed the idea of the teacher as enabler (Woods, 1990a, p.30). This view placed an emphasis in Rosalind's eyes on how the act of teaching and learning could be viewed within the context of the early years setting. It is a particular model which she set out to establish and maintain in her school and which reflected in particular the Piagetian view which I described in Chapter 3 that action is primary in the sense that children construct a knowledge of the world by actively involving themselves in a process of problem solving. In Rosalind's view this involvement was based on what interests children at that time. Her ideas were shown to be capable of moving from general principles to more specific examples of how the curriculum was intended to work. The long term planning contained in the School Development Plan at the school was modelled on the Desirable Learning Outcomes for children. This modelling exemplified an attitude in which Rosalind viewed the suggested outcomes as an opportunity to maintain and re-establish with confidence what she considered to be the strength of her educational ideas, despite a partial embracement of outside structures and demands. In the school's policy the ways in which the learning experiences arising from the Desirable Learning Outcomes and the National Curriculum would "be integrated into the whole curriculum" were specifically described:

When children cook they learn to count and measure, they combine solids and liquids and learn what happens to substances when they are heated and cooled. Woodwork, sewing, gluing and brick-play are particularly important for developing children's problem-solving skills.

The written policy explicitly described play as the most important means by which the curriculum was delivered in the school. There was no specific definition of play but its “freely chosen”, “self-initiated” and “practical” nature was emphasised. The play curriculum was based on a number of activities which were listed in the school’s policy, including books, home corner, cookery, music, clay, painting, writing, sand, water, wooden bricks (large and small), and in the outdoor area wheeled toys, climbing equipment and gardening. It was emphasised also that these activities were provided at all times “although the provision within these may change depending upon children’s observed interests.” There was an emphasis on the activities being chosen because they were “open-ended” and “infinitely extendible” allowing them to be “participated in by any individual at any level of development.” Rosalind herself gave examples of what the policy represented in practice when she described the structure of the curriculum:

I think the structure comes through the provision that we make, through things we have in the classroom for a start and those have to be chosen on the basis that they are open-ended and by that I mean they will allow continuity and progression so that things like the woodwork, where you can improve...so you could come in and do a piece of woodwork at your level even though you’re skilled, you could actually go to the woodwork bench and select appropriate materials and do something yourself.

These ideas echo the notion I discussed in Chapter 3 of constantly available activities (Nutbrown, 1994, p.32) which are in their turn capable of development (Abbott, 1994, p.79; David, 1990, p.76). They also embrace the idea of free-flow play delineated by Bruce (1991, p.4).

The function of adults as direct educators at Bridge was represented by their roles as facilitators, emphasising the idea I discussed previously of the child’s learning arising from the use of language in order to negotiate meaning by means of “transactions with other people” (Edwards and Mercer, 1987, p.165):

They observe and extend the children's play interacting with them either individually or in groups and providing extra resources to develop play where appropriate. Staff are aware of the value of helping children to increase their independence.

Rosalind provided an example of how, in practice, this approach was intended to work:

It might be that you wanted to introduce Spring so you brought in a whole load of flowers and just put them on the floor and the children said, "Why are you sitting there with those flowers?" And you could say, "Well I was cutting up these stems because I thought I'd arrange these flowers," and then they would want to help me, and then they might be involved in using scissors, but then they might be involved at a higher level on: "We've got these flowers because it's Springtime and that's when flowers grow and if you cut off these stalks it helps them to drink, it'll be better than if we don't," and so they're learning all kinds of concepts.

In this idea Rosalind echoed the emphasis which Vygotsky and Bruner place on the adult's role in supporting, co-operating and extending the child's learning, presented in contemporary terms as the adult seeking the "teachable moment" (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996) in which opportunities are grasped for "developing play together" (Bruce, 1997, p.97).

In Rosalind's exposition of her educational ideas, therefore, either by means of her examples or through the policies of her school there is a clarity of expression which not only reveals an understanding of the ideas she is describing but also a commitment to what she espouses as appropriate to the process of teaching and learning.

Ownership of pedagogy at Westside nursery unit.

This sense of personal ownership was less obvious at Westside in both Chris's and Jenni's exposition of their ideas. Both Chris and Jenni expressed similar views of what

they considered to be the nature and purpose of the educational process. Jenni believed that children were “lamps to be lit, not vessels to be filled”. This belief expanded what the written policy described as helping children to realise “their true potential”, as Jenni emphasised:

I see our job as exploring and developing personality and understanding and creativity and imagination rather than cramming them full of facts.

Chris, as Headteacher, had naturally contributed to the discussion of policy within the unit and her own notion of the child echoed that of Jenni’s in her belief in what she also characterised as a holistic interpretation of child-centred education, implying, by means of her notion that “kids do not learn in a straight line”, that knowledge and understanding are not grasped in a hierarchical and systematic way:

I do still very much believe in child-centred education and that you educate for a whole person and that you educate through all kinds of activities.

These ideas were expanded by Chris and Jenni themselves and by means of the policy of the nursery unit in order to explore the process of teaching and learning as it affected the setting. For Chris the process presented a problem to be defined and clarified:

It’s so difficult to explain the process of teaching and learning, you can explain parts of it, you can explain all sorts of aspects of it but to actually explain the whole. And every day I learn something new...and then you have to rethink and redo...I wish it was as easy as making instructions for making a cake but it just isn’t, that is the problem...

For Jenni, the process of teaching and learning was to be defined as the use of a pragmatic pedagogy, reflecting an adaptational approach to her teaching (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p.6):

You use things you’ve learned because I’ve never felt that one idea was always right. I’ve always thought you’d have to be prepared to - what works for one

child wont work for another...It's changed a lot since I've been here, we've brought things in and said, No, that doesn't work and we'll try this and it's been a flexible, what does everyone think, process really. You've got to work with something that works with you, haven't you?

It has been argued that the type of trial and error approach reflected in such ideas and which underlay the organisation of the setting, represent a pluralist way of teaching which embraces the concept of "fitness-for-purpose" (Alexander, 1997, p.270) in curriculum planning and delivery:

The stance is pluralist: there are many versions of good practice, not just one or a few, and these are defined not away from the classroom but within it, since they arise directly from the decisions of teachers as they seek to match professional practice with educational purpose, and from the unique contexts and dynamics which have influenced these decisions.

Alexander's notion of intentionality (1995, p.35) applies here also. Contained within the more pragmatic approach expounded by Jenni was a belief in a degree of spontaneity in children's learning, a "going with the flow" (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p.34) in which providing for the children's individual interests was seen as educationally important. This belief represented the justification for the use of free play in the unit. This type of play was described in the unit's policy as being "unstructured play activities", examples of which included painting and drawing as an introduction to writing, tracing and puzzles to develop fine motor control and sand, water, the outside area and construction activities as an introduction to Science. There was no specific definition of what purposes unstructured play served except indirectly in the section on the Role of Adults in Play. This role was perceived as "initially to provide a stimulating environment with materials and opportunities for the children to develop socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively." In conjunction with the notion of free play was a belief expressed by Jenni and the unit's policies in the need for a particular type

of structured approach, echoing the ideas which I described in Chapter 3 arising from the work of the Oxford Pre-School Project (Bruner, 1980):

Structured activities, I do see a place for those because children aren't naturally going to know how to investigate things on their own, I don't think children automatically say, "Oh yes, and we can do this now," because this leads on from that, especially our children, I don't think they do, I mean we were exploring bubbles this morning in Science and they (*Anne and Linda*) said, "What about bubble follow up activities," and we said, "Well, bubble painting." Now children wouldn't think of doing that on their own, they wouldn't say, "Well, let's put some paint in bottles and put paper on the bottom and blow bubbles on them." We actually have to show them.

This example represented a more directional approach expounded in the unit's written policy as including "carefully planned activities provid(ing) for conceptual development and mathematical language" in Mathematics Experience, structured as well as unstructured activities in Music and working freely or "with direction" in Creative Arts and Physical Education. These types of activities were built around the termly topic and were planned on a weekly basis. Observations and records of children's progress would be based on these activities and were not extended to "unstructured" play in the setting. The juxtaposition of a planned and observed set of structured activities and a largely unplanned, unstructured element caused the unit's educational approaches to attempt to place a foot in both pedagogical camps. It could, however, be suggested that Jenni's philosophy of trial and error in her provision for play did not constitute an integrated approach to the curriculum, thus creating the potential for confusion. For example, a concentration on planning for and observing and assessing structured activities only, exemplified a limited view of the usefulness of free play. In this way it could be argued that "play" could be regarded as the activities in which children were left to pursue their own interests, while the structured activities represented "work" activities which were given a higher status in the policy of the school (Boyle, 1998). In

this way there was not a clear understanding of the educational benefits of play within the unit, exemplified by the use of the term "play" also to describe structured activities in the form they were introduced in the unit.

At Westside there was a separate section in the unit's policy entitled "Role of Adults in Play". This role was described as involving four stages of intervention: observe the children play, participate, structure, extend. There were no further definitions of these terms in the policy or examples of the way in which they could be used in the context of the children's play. In addition, not only could the role of the adult in the case of the four stages of adult intervention not apply to the children's free play, but confusion was caused by the fact that in the context of structured activities that same intervention would, in practice, normally take place as an initial step in the cycle and not as part of the sequence suggested in the written policy.

There was also a difference of attitude in the two settings towards the influence of the National Curriculum and the Desirable Learning Outcomes. I have already described the way in which Rosalind viewed the suggested Outcomes as providing an opportunity to assert her educational philosophy. At Westside, Chris maintained that there were some "very, very, very good things" about the National Curriculum. Just as Ofsted had represented for Chris the opportunity "for very searching questions about policy and practice" so her positive attitude to the National Curriculum represented a way in which centrally imposed systems had been accepted by her and had informed her pedagogy. In the context of the relationship between the nursery unit and the school it was no coincidence that the unit's policy emphasised that many of the National Curriculum areas "were always found to be in existence in a well planned and balanced curriculum" and as a result an awareness of the National Curriculum should permeate the curriculum of the nursery. In echoing the structure of the National Curriculum the policy itself was also divided into subject headings such as Personal and Social Education, Language Development, Mathematical Experience, Science, Information Technology, Technology, Music, Creative Arts, Physical Education, Religious Education and

History/Geography. Despite these divisions into subjects the policy explained that "the wholeness of our curriculum must be emphasised". The substantial extent of the acknowledgement of developments such as the National Curriculum exemplified Jenni's personal ideas of trial and error represented in the notion of fitness for purpose (Alexander, 1997, p.270). In this way the balance of adaptation to outside pressures was greater at Westside than at Bridge and permeated the policy of the unit. It could be suggested, therefore, that Jenni's and Chris's responses to outside pressures such as the National Curriculum represented a process of incorporation in which those ideas had become to a large extent absorbed into their philosophies. This, in itself, need not have precluded a sense of commitment to and ownership of such an incorporation. However, because there was a lack of clarity in the delineation of the unit's pedagogy, there existed a sense in which particular models of viewing teaching and learning were being pursued without a genuine understanding of "intentionality". In this way the sense of ownership of the pedagogy was in doubt.

Children's ownership of their learning.

Just as teachers need to possess ownership of their pedagogy if they are to begin to make it effective, so if children's knowledge and understanding are to become meaningful to them they need to possess a particular grasp and understanding of the significance for them in their play of the knowledge they are developing (Woods, 1995, p.3). At Bridge, the emphasis on creating a provision which was "freely chosen" and "self-initiated" meant that in policy there was a commitment to the notion of children gaining ownership of their learning. Where examples of genuine ownership of learning occurred, they involved the experience of confidence and independence. Just such a sense of ownership emerging from the development of personal confidence could lead to a feeling of empowerment. For example, one hot morning the children at Westside had been able to use the outdoor area earlier than usual. Various pieces of equipment had been put there and Attia had chosen to play with the water tray. She became absorbed in filling and emptying different plastic containers with water and

experimenting with how many containers of water it would take to fill a kettle. After trying this with different containers she then filled each of them with spoonfuls of water, counting the number of spoonfuls it took to fill each container. She was careful to fill each container to the limit of its capacity without overfilling it, revealing an early understanding of the rules and nature of capacity using a variety of containers to exemplify the fact that these rules remain constant. Attia had been absorbed in this activity for several minutes until a girl and a boy approached the water tray and asked her if they could play with her. She helped each of them to put on a waterproof apron and proceeded to show them what she had been doing, encouraging them to join in. This desire to share her experiences and knowledge with others represented a way in which Attia, in building her confidence and independence, possessed a sense of empowerment which gave her a particular ownership of the activity and its significance for her.

Control.

Control of the pedagogy established and maintained by the creative teacher characterises another feature of the personal power already represented by ownership of ideas and methodologies. The educator's control of her pedagogy involves possessing the freedom to apply her ideas to teaching and learning in the ways which she feels most appropriate.

Educators' control over their pedagogies.

The strong ownership of her pedagogy which Rosalind possessed enabled her to withstand to a substantial degree the influence of outside pressures and any adaptations to these demands, as, for example, in the structure of the school's Development Plan which lay firmly within the framework of her beliefs. As headteacher she maintained a strong control of the pedagogy of her school, which reflected entirely her own outlook. This control arose from her own doubts about sharing decision making with her staff, reflected in her notion that:

I don't think that true democracy works in a school if I'm going to be honest, I think there has to be a leader who makes the final decision...I couldn't actually implement a decision that was against my better judgement because the teaching staff had taken it.

At Westside, the potential for control by all the educators in the nursery was greater. The level of collaboration between Jenni and her nursery nurses meant that there was a sense in which each member of the team possessed some control over the methodologies of the unit, as both Anne and Linda confirmed. Anne maintained in this respect that because all the educators carried out the preparation and planning together the relationship with Jenni was more like that of a co-ordinator and her teachers. However, Jenni's responsibility for policy in the nursery unit existed in the context of the school as a whole. This created particular pressures on her as exemplified by her feelings of responsibility towards preparing the full-time children for their move to the school's reception class:

I think I wouldn't be doing the reception teacher a service if I hadn't drawn the line and said, "OK the game's over now."

The work which Jenni carried out with the children represented a preparation for them to become pupils within the context of the main school (Boyle, 1998):

Obviously you're preparing them for school inasmuch as you want them to be able to sit down and concentrate but as far as National Curriculum goes I don't particularly say, "Oh yes, we ought to do a bit on magnets or weather watching because that's going to come up", I don't want it to be prescriptive. What I would consider for my specific group is not more formal but more of the pre-reading ones or develop speaking and listening skills with a Lotto game on the tape or something like that.

The effect of these types of activities was that because of what Jenni viewed as the methodological demands emanating from the main school a limitation was imposed on

the ability of herself and her nursery nurses to control the pedagogy of the unit. In this context it was significant that Jenni herself recognised the extent to which the demands of the National Curriculum were permeating the work of the unit, leading, in its turn, to a sense of intensification in which she felt required even indirectly to comply with its demands. Jenni's experience in this respect exemplified the way in which, even in early years settings, the pressure to comply with the requirements of others is strong, leading to an experience of deprofessionalisation (Woods, 1996, p.29).

Children's control over their learning.

In the model of creative learning suggested by Woods (1995, p.2) children, in the act of learning, need to possess control of the processes with which they are engaged, in order to make that learning directly meaningful to them. It is through this measure of control that the child is able to develop a sense of ownership of the knowledge produced. In this way, the ultimate aim of the pedagogy at Bridge, expressed in the written policy, was that children should be enabled to "take control of their own learning" by "encouraging and developing children's abilities to make decisions and...meaningful personal choices." An example of this in practice was the way in which children were encouraged to explore and experiment with paint. Sonny was exploring the effect which a roller had on the paint which he was using on paper. He covered a sheet of paper with brown paint using the roller and then turned the paper over and began to repeat the process on the other side carefully using short strokes with the roller, while looking at the effect he was creating. After covering both sides he picked up the sheet and carried it to the painting rack and, collecting another sheet, he began the process again with some fresh paint. The important aspect of this activity was that Sonny recognised that he possessed the freedom to experiment with the medium in the way which he considered was most appropriate to him while exploring the ways in which colour and texture could be represented with his particular choice of tools. In this way he possessed control over the processes to the fullest extent of his interest.

This level of control depended, in Sonny's case, on his ability to have at his disposal the kind of resources with which he could experiment, based on his personal decision making. This opportunity for freedom to control contrasted with the resourcing for painting at Westside. Such an activity consisted of pieces of white rectangular paper fixed with clips to easels. Paint pots with brushes were provided for the children and they used the colours available at the particular easel at which they were painting. This standard equipment remained the same each day and no further equipment was available for the children to use the medium in different planes. This led to a limitation of opportunities for children to explore the potential for experimentation and development of the activity itself. Several children were observed using this activity on a regular basis and in the same way, for example, painting a picture and moving away to remove their painting overall and washing their hands while an adult removed the painting from the easel and put it on a rack to dry. In this way the equipment was pre-set by the adult and there was not a sense in which the course of the activity was under the children's control.

The degree to which children could exercise control over their learning was exemplified by some of the routines which formed part of the daily life of the settings. At Westside there were formal occasions during the morning and afternoon when Jenni, Anne, Linda and Nadia collected their groups to have milk or water. At Bridge the milk was put out with mugs on a table in the centre of each classroom so that the children could help themselves. This was intended to provide opportunities for children to choose when they had their milk so that they were not interrupted if they had become engrossed in an activity. The routine for the use of the outdoor area was different also for each nursery. At Westside the children were allowed to go out for about half an hour after they had finished their milk. At Bridge the outdoor area was available to the children throughout each session and therefore was regarded as a natural extension of the indoor provision, providing sources of experiential learning which complemented and where appropriate extended experimentation inside the classroom, as in Woods' description of the use of the environment at Coombes (1995). In this way, the environment and the

opportunities arising from it were viewed as pivotal to the way in which it was used as a tool for teaching and learning. At Westside, in contrast, the routine of stopping in groups for the drinking of milk and the use of the outdoor area as a form of play time mirrored the routines which were current in the rest of the school and formed part of the process of preparing all the children in the unit for their eventual move to the main school where they were to be inducted into becoming 'proper pupils' in a particular anglicised model (Boyle and Woods, forthcoming). This difference of approach represented for the children at Bridge a substantially greater control over their learning, enabling them to use whichever aspects of the environment they wished for whatever period of time was relevant to their interests.

Relevance.

If knowledge conveyed to the children is relevant to their concerns (Woods, 1995, p.3) and reflects their societal and cultural knowledge (Jeffrey and Woods, 1997, p.15), then it becomes for the child "personal knowledge" (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p.116).

Relevance for children in structured and unstructured activities.

For the bilingual children in both settings free play represented an important part of their daily experience. However, there were differences in approach which had a significant effect on the relevance of those experiences for the children. These differences were highlighted by the emphasis on the use of free play as a source of providing "a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum" at Bridge and the division between "structured and unstructured play activities" at Westside. The extensive use of structured activities echoed the emphasis in the written policies of the unit that such activities were designed to provide "conceptual development", giving them a particular status in the teaching and learning process. The structured activities in the unit generally represented approximately half of those taking place in the nursery during any one session. The approaches towards and the status given to unstructured play at Bridge emphasised the idea of a curriculum which because it was based on the children's interests possessed a

particular relevance for them. This approach meant that there was a consistent philosophy underpinning the use of play in the setting in contrast to Westside. The overriding status given at Westside to structured activities at the expense of unstructured and free play meant that to a substantial degree the importance of children's own interests were largely ignored in the day to day work of the unit. For example, structured activities took two forms, firstly, sessions of experimentation where the educator would demonstrate a particular activity, for example cooking, to a group of children and the children would repeat the activity, or, secondly, children would individually or in a group carry out a specific task such as painting or sticking, often using templates which the educator had already prepared. On these occasions children would generally be working on their own to complete the task and the results would form a wall or three dimensional display in the unit. Examples observed of this type of activity included Iqbal working on his own at the same table as his particular friend painting lolly sticks as part of a project in which all the children in the nursery made windmills out of similar materials.

The other type of structured activity occurred when Jenni would work with the full-time children to carry out formal language or mathematics work. This group would work with Jenni for approximately half an hour each day during morning storytime. These activities could have provided a source of relevant knowledge, but the problem arising from them was that despite the fact that they formed the basis for planning in the unit they were consistently disembedded from the children's personal play and interests, thus failing to address the issue of relevance for the child (Donaldson et al, 1983, quoted in Bruce, 1991, p.64). This particular lack of relevance arose from an absence of any observations of children's free play, which meant that specific planning for this aspect of the curriculum imposed an important limitation on the educators' ability to recognise significant aspects of children's learning which could have provided relevant learning opportunities in both structured and unstructured situations. For example, on one occasion Jenni had ended the morning working with her group of children. The activity had consisted initially of identifying different shapes which she had put out on

the floor as she and the children sat together in a circle. She then asked the group either to colour in cardboard circles (3 each of different sizes to make a mobile later) or to colour in a pattern of shapes which she had printed on a piece of paper, for example, a strip with a square followed by an oblong. In contrast to this, earlier the same morning, Attia, who was a member of this same group, had chosen an activity in which she was placing unifix blocks in a square grid. With the blocks she was creating vertical and horizontal patterns created by matching numbers and colours of blocks. She then proceeded to count the different colours and to inform me of her results. This was an activity which involved a knowledge of colour as well as pattern and numbers and because the child had been free to engage with the activity in a way which enabled her to experiment with her own knowledge she had revealed a more advanced understanding of colour, shape and number than she was given an opportunity to do later that morning. Had this example of free play been observed and noted by an educator the activity which Attia was invited to carry out later that morning could have been more in keeping with the degree of knowledge which she already possessed. This example illustrated the fact that activities arising from specifically planned situations involved the removal of children from their play in order to perform tasks which were closely controlled by the adult both in the method of execution and the homogeneity of the results, exemplified by the sticking and painting of templates already prepared by the educator. This substantial element of adult control required the children to 'set' their minds to these activities (ibid, p.64) in situations divorced from the relevance arising from their interests and existing knowledge.

In contrast, children's ability through play to experiment with and explore ideas which interest them using their own existing knowledge (Moyles, 1994, p.4), makes play particularly relevant to them. The significance of these types of activities was exemplified by the children's play in the house. One morning Aisha was observed on her own sweeping up in the house with a dustpan and brush. She put on a pair of oven gloves, went to the cooker and opened the door. She then visited a house which had been set up in the corridor before returning to the main house and taking off her apron.

On another occasion she had decided to prepare drinks for Ravinder. She took two cups from the house where Ravinder was also playing and carried them to the milk table where she filled them from a jug of water. She carried the cups back into the house and put them down saying to Ravinder: "There's some water for you. That is mine (pointing to one of the cups) and that is yours." After drinking some of the water she went out of the house taking two dishes with her, saying to Ravinder: "I'll come back in a minute." She chose some pieces of small coloured paper and scrap from the gluing table and returned to the house saying: "That's mine and that's Victoria's" (one of the dolls in the house). Meanwhile Aditya arrived at the house and asked: "Can I come in?" to which Aisha replied: "No you can't come in, it's my house, it's not your house." These examples provide an insight into the way in which role play centred around the house enabled Aisha to make links with actuality moulding and recreating the language and habits of home to give them meaning for her personally within the nursery environment.

Cultural relevance for bilingual learners.

Both schools expressed an awareness of the experiences and skills which bilingual children brought to the nursery. The multi-cultural education document at Bridge recognised that "we live in a multi-ethnic society and that opportunities should be equal for all children regardless of their race and culture." Within the policies of both schools there was a description of the schools' attitudes towards cultural identity. For example, at Westside:

We encourage our children to be aware of, and have pride in their rich cultural heritage. We learn of and discuss this heritage through festivals and family celebrations. Whenever possible we encourage an awareness of the immediate community between home and school.

Anne, Linda and Nadia supported the notion of celebrating children's cultures within school, whether by means of festivals or resources. Anne maintained also that the

celebration of children's cultures helped to make them and their families more responsive and open towards the unit.

This desire to make aspects of the nursery environment relevant to the children's diverse cultures was contained in the multi-cultural education policy at Bridge where there was also a recognition of the "value of religious and other festivals", however, in this case, in order to "give all our children the opportunity to experience and appreciate the richness and diversity of cultures other than their own."

Significantly, however, at Westside, in sections of the unit's policy dealing with other subjects such as Mathematical Experience, Science, Information and Design Technology, Music and Creative Arts, no mention was made of the need to be aware of cultural diversity and the content and resourcing implications which would result from such an awareness. The multi-cultural education policy at Bridge, on the other hand, emphasised the need to make all areas of the nursery reflect "the multi-cultural society in which we live" by suggesting that books, tapes and other equipment should relate to "those different cultures". Kate emphasised the importance of creating a nursery environment whose resourcing reflected the diversity of cultures represented in the setting. She maintained, however, that this had not as yet been achieved in the school.

In practice, the environment represented by the resourcing at Bridge and Westside was that reflected generally in an anglocentric view of the world. There were a number of examples of provision in the settings which failed to address the cultural diversity which characterised the reality of the world outside the nurseries and certainly the communities represented in the settings themselves. For example, the home corners or areas were a central feature in both nurseries providing the potential for imaginative and role play related to the children's own familial experiences. Generally the equipment provided in these areas contained the domestic and cooking equipment which would be available in all homes. However, this same universality precluded the presence of artefacts and pictures with which the children could identify as well as items such as

food dishes with which the children could recreate the diversity of items traditionally available at Asian meal times.

In addition, dressing up was closely linked to home play and the clothes at both nurseries did contain a few Asian materials with which children could make Saris but these were the exception and the greatest number of clothes reflected an English culture. In addition, cooking activities at both nurseries almost exclusively reflected the same specific culture whether it consisted of making crispies, dough, biscuits or cakes. This was true even when festivals such as Diwali and Eid were being celebrated by the children, although at Bridge there were opportunities for children to make barfi during the week in which Diwali was celebrated. Generally, however, the provision of Asian food on these occasions was left to parents.

At Westside displays of children's art reflected the work which the children were carrying out under the supervision of educators at that particular time, generally based on the topic for the term. When festivals such as Diwali were being celebrated there would be appropriate wall displays based on children's pictures of divas or mendi patterns but as a general rule there were not displays of cultural artefacts or pictures at any time including when Asian festivals were being celebrated. At Bridge, where for educational reasons, there were few displays of children's work, displays which were prepared by educators consisted of those connected with topics in which they were encouraging the children to become interested, including temporary table displays consisting of pictures and artefacts connected with the current celebration of Diwali. Artefacts and pictures reflecting Asian cultures did not form part of any displays at other times during the year. In fact at Bridge there was only the occasional evidence of community languages displayed for children to see, and indeed there was very little environmental print of any kind in evidence including labelling of equipment. At Westside there were some labels in community languages usually associated with displays of work although there was no attempt to represent these languages consistently on labelling or environmental print around the unit.

Both nurseries had book areas and at Bridge children were allowed to take books home to share with parents. Books consisted in the main of conventional picture books, but generally in English, although in both nurseries there were a few dual language story books which were not necessarily on display at any one time. There were no books exclusively in any one community language and only a very few books in either nursery portrayed children from ethnic minority cultures.

The lack of a consistent provision for cultural diversity in the physical provision of the settings belied in practice the expressed commitment to diversity maintained in the policies. In addition, the culture specific nature of the physical environment acted to withhold from the schools' bilingual children the opportunity to gain ownership of the curriculum by means of a culturally relevant environment. In addition, at neither nursery, including in the entry profiles in each setting, were there any opportunities in the observation and planning systems for educators to assess and plan for activities embracing the children's cultural knowledge and understanding. This reflected the limited view in practice of the importance of this concern within the curriculum of each school. In this way opportunities were lost to create an environment capable of tapping the potential for learning afforded by the children's diverse perspectives (Stevenson, 1992, p.36). The limitations of this approach were exemplified by the links which, in their play, children were making with their lives at home. One day, Aditya at Bridge was making cheese scones with Kate and was kneading the dough to mix the flour and margarine. At one point she took a piece of the dough and worked it into a ball. She then put it between her hands and began to flatten it, working it from hand to hand in imitation of the way chapatis are made, a method she had obviously seen Gita, her mother, using at home. The recreation by Aditya of the act of making chapatis emphasised the opportunities which could have been provided to make these links even more explicit and relevant by providing occasions on which food from Asian and other cultures could have been made by the children as a normal part of the curriculum.

Linguistic relevance for bilingual learners.

A curriculum which possesses cultural relevance for the bilingual child reflects the degree to which she is able to use and develop her knowledge of language, including her community language, in the company of others, including adults. The role of the adult at Westside was viewed as providing "opportunities for the children to listen and communicate ideas and use their linguistic skills to socialise with peers and adults." The importance of the encouragement of community languages was described in a specific section on Mother Tongue. The policy emphasised that respect was given to the "children's own language" and that encouragement was also given to the children to develop linguistic skills in their mother tongue. Examples of how this was to be achieved were not described except to say that adults try to learn vocabulary and phrases which will help them "to communicate effectively with the children and their families" and that the children's abilities to translate are used to "encourage the skill of bilingual translation." There was only one other reference to community languages in the policy and that was in the section entitled Reading Programme. There was an emphasis on the need to build on all the experiences the children will have had by means of books and stories which help children to "be aware that words convey meaning in all languages and that the understanding and meaning of those words is reading." However, in the section on Listening, Understanding and Speaking there was no reference to the use of community languages when listening to stories and talking together and the policy emphasised that the acquisition of English was vital "to enable each child to make the fullest use of the school curriculum and gain acceptance into the wider community." Anne echoed the written policy by maintaining that, although she was happy for the children to use their community languages in school, the learning of English should take priority. Both Nadia and Linda, on the other hand, considered it important that community languages should be actively encouraged. The written policy at Bridge also emphasised the benefit of encouraging community languages:

We recognise that the use of community languages in school enriches the experience of all children. Children acquiring the main language of the school as a second language and children whose first language it is, broaden their experience and advance their learning by hearing other languages.

Rosalind herself echoed the policy document in her expressed support for the use of community languages in school:

It's very important that we do value the home language, the Bengali language and the Panjabi language as much as any other languages, I do think that's very important. That would be encouraged in school because my understanding of language development is that the more skilled in your mother tongue, the more skilled you'd be in other languages and it means that our British children are hearing a rich variety of languages which can only add to their knowledge of language.

For Kate, the importance of the children's use of their community languages in school arose from her belief that in this way they would be able to gain knowledge of concepts while they were developing their understanding of English.

Children were observed using their community languages together on a number of occasions, generally on a one to one basis, but also, particularly in Iqbal's case, amongst small groups of friends. These uses arose naturally out of the relationships and ways of working which the children were developing, providing means by which they were able to find common ground together as a form of mutual bond and to cement what they already knew culturally and linguistically. This process of establishing relevant means of communication revealed a flexible set of skills which the children used quite naturally as part of their cultural repertoire. This was exemplified by Attia and Rabeela who always spoke in English together because Attia's community language was Bengali and Rabeela's Panjabi. This knowledge about language was a common feature manifested by even the younger bilingual children. While having their milk on

the carpet Tariq and Fatima sat close to each other and talked quietly in Panjabi, a conversation which lasted several minutes while the other children went outside to play. Jabidul sat on the tandem outside with his friend and as they drove around they stopped occasionally and spoke together in Panjabi laughing and tickling each other.

It is significant, however, that the encouragement of and organisation for the development of community languages was viewed not as an opportunity for expanding the curriculum but rather as a problem arising from a lack of knowledge amongst the educators. In this way, the predominance of the use of English by educators in the settings made a contribution to the culture specific nature of the curriculum. Indeed, this situation was exacerbated by the fact that extended interactions between children and adults were infrequent. Where interactions did take place they were normally in the form either of brief comments by educators when they intervened in children's play, or when they were correcting or instructing children as part of the routines and day to day organisation of the settings. In reality, the difficulty under which the majority of educators worked in the two settings was that they were monolingual and shared neither a knowledge of the community languages represented in the schools nor an understanding of those communities. No monolingual teacher had attempted to learn even simple phrases in any community languages. Therefore, the predominance of the use of English by the educators tended with a few exceptions to mean that communication in community languages became a medium for private and unofficial interactions between children playing with or in the company of their peers. This also meant that these same uses lacked the status afforded to English in the nurseries and also meant that speaking one's own first language became less than overt.

Nadia and Sonia (the bilingual Section 11 assistant at Bridge) as Panjabi speakers were employed specifically to promote and enable the use by bilingual children of their community languages. Obviously for those children whose first language was other than Panjabi difficulties arose. This meant that there were certain restrictions on the way in which Nadia and Sonia could be used, especially at Westside where there was a

greater diversity of community languages spoken. At Westside Nadia was used in a similar capacity to other educators in helping and interacting with individual children as well as taking groups of children for practical activities such as cooking and for stories at the end of the afternoon some of which she would read in Panjabi. However, there was no specific nursery policy related to her encouragement of the use of Panjabi by children and she was not observed going out of her way to use her community language in groups or with individuals although she did generally respond appropriately to those children who spoke Panjabi to her. She emphasised that the younger and less confident children would always speak Panjabi to her as a way of building their communicative and social confidence but there were no systems in place to record these occasions or any other times when the children chose to speak their community languages.

At Bridge also Sonia was used as an additional educator, generally interacting with children on a one to one basis. She did not go out of her way to speak Panjabi with children although she did take a story in Panjabi once a week with a group of children in each classroom. Again there was no specific school policy concerning the means by which community languages could be encouraged nor were there systems in place to assess bilingual children's use of language. At both nurseries this lack of a detailed commitment to community languages in practice was reflected in the insufficient status given to both Nadia's and Sonia's cultural and linguistic knowledge as an educational tool.

Relevance in the development of multi-cultural and anti-racist policy.

In Chapter 3 I discussed the suggestion by May (1994, p.4) of an anti-racist approach coupled with multi-culturalism as an achievable aim in schools. To some extent there was an awareness in policy and amongst the educators of the importance of moving beyond the surface features of a multi-cultural policy on its own in order to develop the relevance of the curriculum in relation to cultural diversity. For example, the multi-cultural education policy at Bridge expressed the school's intention of dealing with racism "if it occurs, by encouraging positive attitudes towards cultural diversity".

However, whereas in policy documents practical examples were provided of ways in which the settings' environments could be improved to reflect cultural diversity, in statements regarding the establishment of systems for monitoring and transforming attitudes and practices no practical suggestions for achieving these ends were suggested. For example, in the multi-cultural education policy at Bridge no practical suggestions were made as to how to encourage "attitudes of tolerance and understanding of different cultures among pupils and staff" in dealing with racism. At Westside Jenni provided a clue to the central issue facing the monolingual staffs at both schools, that of empathy and understanding:

You tend to assume that all children have a teddy bear to go to bed with because this is what happens in English families and you can't take that as a starting point with the children, or even that they wear pyjamas. I came unstuck the other day when we were talking, it had honestly never occurred to me before that they don't actually get changed into that, so we show them a picture of a little boy in his dressing gown, pyjamas and a teddy and they've not got the words for it because they don't have those things.

The theme of empathy and understanding raises for educators the issue of the degree to which cultural diversity becomes part of their explicit educational philosophy in the sense of how such an issue can be used to inform and then transform the policy and practice as well as the structures in schools (Epstein, 1993, p.103). In this respect it is significant that both policy and practice reflected a limited view of the relevance of provision for cultural diversity and its effect on the pedagogy of the settings. The extent of this limitation was exemplified by the way such diversity was viewed in relation to the particular models of early years practice in the schools. At Westside the policy document illustrated the predominance of the setting's curriculum:

Many of our children are from a different culture and will arrive in our nursery with different skills, experiences and values. All children will need to be introduced to *our curriculum* (my italics) with care and understanding.

At Bridge the particular relationship between the bilingual child and the school's curriculum was less explicit but there was an emphasis, nevertheless, on the importance of all children's access to the "Nursery Curriculum". In neither instance was there an explanation of the nature of that curriculum culturally and its relevance for bilingual learners. Moreover, there is a sense in both examples that the curriculum belonged to the nurseries and their educators, and not to the children, despite an emphasis elsewhere on the need for a child-centred approach to teaching and learning.

It can be seen, therefore, that the issue of relevance for bilingual learners was problematical in both settings. In this context, it can be argued that for bilingual learners the issue of relevance holds the key to the extent to which potentially they are able to relate to and identify with their educational environment. If they are able to do so then the foundations are laid for a wider embracement of knowledge and understanding fundamental to the process of creative learning.

Innovation.

An important aspect of "genuine" creativity in the act of teaching (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p.9) is to be innovative, to introduce and find alternative and appropriate ways of engaging with pupils and the knowledge to be shared and developed. The innovation can be to do with process as well as product (Woods, 1995, p.1). It requires flexibility, turning apparent constraints into opportunities (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p.7).

Educators' approaches to innovative teaching.

At Bridge the curriculum was designed to be one of "process" rather than "product" with the emphasis, as Rosalind described, on children bringing their own interests to bear on their learning. For Rosalind, flexibility and adaptability were part of her school's way of working, based as they were on what she viewed as responding to the children's own interests, for example: "if the children had their interest, like at the woodwork they have an interest in transport and one puts out things that might suggest wheels on that day." It might also come from a process of resourcing which again

enabled the educator to adapt to what interested the child. Rosalind cited a particular example to illustrate this innovative approach in action, stressing the way in which flexibility and an emphasis on process can provide a basis for developing a theme or interest:

The other day for instance we had a child who brought in a plastic spoon which changed colour when it was put into cold water, so ice was got out and people brought in T-shirts that changed with heat and we looked at how things change with temperature, so you can go with it and if you can see the possibilities you can extend things to a high level with children.

At Westside also the belief in "spontaneity" meant that for Jenni the moment could be seized and teaching could respond to the children's interests:

I think it's probably more spontaneous than teaching is in a Lower School, I mean, do you remember when we had the Irish dancers and the little girls came back and put the record on? And that's what I like about it because we can do that, you can just follow on you see, it's spontaneous. You can say, "Well let's do it," or, "Let's go and paint", because the paint's out already and you haven't got to set it all up and plan it.

Anne, Linda and Nadia echoed this approach, Linda, in particular, emphasising the multiplicity of learning experiences arising from this way of working.

However, the opportunities for consistent innovation in teaching at Westside based on spontaneity and "going with the flow" (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p.34) were restricted by the demands for more homogeneous formal activities and the lack of observations of children's play which could have provided the basis for engaging with children in flexible and adaptive ways as part of the process of responding to "teachable moments" (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996). For example, one morning the children from the nursery had been taken on a visit to the local health centre where they had met the dentist and taken it in turns to sit on her patient's chair and to rinse their mouths out with the water

containing pink disinfectant. There were some children's toys in the waiting room including some Osmiroid sand timers. That same afternoon Tariq had been playing in the sand and after a few minutes went to watch Anne helping a child on the computer which had a graphic sand timer which replaced the cursor while the programme was waiting to carry out a command. Tariq had seen this and coming to me remarked, "That sand that goes up and down in the bottle, my Dad doesn't buy me one. He'll have to go to the dentist to buy one." A few minutes later I asked him if he had a badge (the children had been given a sticker about looking after one's teeth). Tariq shook his head and said: "And I haven't got that thing" pointing to the computer, meaning the sand timer. A little later he came to me and said, with the sand timer on his mind: "My Mum and Dad won't buy me one. I know the way there, I could walk there myself." The visit to the health centre would have provided several opportunities to listen to and examine the experience with the children. For a child such as Tariq, eager to explore his experience and create personal meanings from it, just such an interaction could have provided for him a process of personal enablement and personal meaning making in the sense of his understanding of the significance of his experiences.

Innovation in children's learning.

As suggested previously, innovation as part of the totality of creative teaching can lead also to innovative learning in which the child's understanding and knowledge are developed in some way. In this sense as I discussed in Chapter 3 it has been argued that in play, because there are no pressures to produce an appropriate result, consequently the child is enabled to act creatively and innovatively (Sutton-Smith, 1975, quoted in Gura, 1992, p.117). For example, in the outdoor area at Bridge there was a large set of wooden building blocks made up individually in the form of frames from which the children could make a variety of large models which were large enough for them to get inside. On one hot afternoon a fire broke out among a pile of discarded tyres in a yard a few hundred yards behind the nursery garden. The children, including Sonny, who were already outside went to the railings to watch the smoke. After a few minutes of

watching the fire Sonny began building with the blocks what he described as a "fire car." After adding a plank of wood to the structure to complete it Aisha approached him and asked if she could sit in it. She sat inside while he went to collect another plank of wood to put on the structure. By this time Surinder had arrived and he, Aisha and Sonny sat together in the fire engine he had made. Because of the nature and extent of the materials available to Sonny at that time he was able to use the moment to translate and transform an actual event and to enter into it in his imagination through the medium of the fire engine he had had the opportunity to make. It also provided a way of sharing an act of storying with others, so that they could place themselves at the centre of the imaginative act of being firefighters in the context of a real event. Sonny, in building the fire engine, was advancing a number of personal skills, including a knowledge of shape and space, as well as technological techniques as he fitted the large pieces of equipment together to design and make a structure which he and his friends could actually enter. In this way Sonny's ability to adapt the provision to create personal links with an observed reality provides an example of the way in which aspects of creative teaching have the potential for a direct and immediate effect on the process of creative learning.

Two Further Aspects of Creative Teaching and Learning.

My research indicated two further significant properties of creative teaching and learning: opportunity, and growth and development. The success of creative teaching and learning depends on the development and maintenance of pedagogies and curricula which allow for and encourage opportunities for educators and children to pursue what is important to them. For educators, these opportunities represent important means by which their ownership and control of their pedagogies can be translated into practice with the minimum of constraints. Within the context of a curriculum which is relevant, the ability of the child to gain ownership and control of her learning depends on the opportunities which she has to engage with her environment and with those others who can aid her in her learning. In this way creative learning could be said to involve the

creation of opportunities for children to interact with and explore their environment, as Woods and Jeffrey (1996) emphasise:

Exploration involves freedom to try out new ways, new activities, different solutions, some of which will inevitably fail. It is important that education provides that kind of opportunity and disposition to play, and to take it to the limit, for 'to be able to play with ideas is to feel free to throw them into new combinations, to experiment, and even "to fail" (Eisner, 1979: 160). Play stimulates the educational imagination and increases the ability to see and take advantage of new opportunities (p.5).

The test of creative teaching and learning depends, in the final analysis, on the degree to which for both educators and children there is a sense of personal momentum, a growth and development in the case of the educators of their professional knowledge and expertise and, in the case of the children, of understanding, knowledge and the creation and maintenance of skills which enable them to move forward cognitively. If this aspect of creativity is not present, then it can be argued that teaching and learning are in danger of becoming static and without development, thereby losing the full potential afforded by creative approaches.

Because Rosalind and Chris were headteachers and Jenni a co-ordinator they possessed in the context of the characteristics of opportunity, and growth and development a three-fold responsibility: to themselves, to other members of staff and to the children in their schools.

Opportunity.

Opportunities for educators' professional development.

Significantly, Rosalind's, Jenni's and Chris's assertion of the need for the creation of opportunities was characterised as a way of establishing their own beliefs through the

medium of their staffs. This was exemplified by Chris's view of the kind of teaching opportunities she would like her management role to achieve:

I know it sounds pretty silly but I want them to be happy, this staff to come in with enthusiasm and joy and to take risks with children in their learning, that will put a spark in them because people feel I can be supported, I really want to take a risk in terms of developing this but I know she'll come in and take heart and I know she won't judge. I've been here four years and I have never, ever, ever raised my voice or been difficult in terms of not talking it through.

Opportunities for the concentration by teachers on their roles as educators were viewed by Chris and Rosalind as central to their own functions as headteachers. For Chris this was "at the expense very often of what I am supposed to be doing as a manager." For Rosalind the issue of opportunity was represented by a process of providing a supportive environment for her staff within a context of protecting them from outside pressures:

The head's job to me is to take all those pressures off the staff, to take the pressure from above. Your job is to take that as a head and deal with it and say, No I'm not going to change and this is the way my school is and not allow that pressure to filter down to the staff. The good head (says) the pressure stops here so that the staff are just left not feeling pressured but to get on with the job and not involved in other political issues that they don't need to be involved with and not feel all the time worried.

For Jenni, her management role represented a way in which she could provide opportunities for her nursery nurses to share the decision making with her:

In terms of the planning we tend to do it together, they always tell me what they're going to do the next week and really they are very good which makes my job so much easier.

Opportunities for creative teaching.

Opportunities for children to explore and experiment were implicit in the notion in the policy at Westside that the unit would provide “every opportunity...for the children to explore all areas of play provision in the nursery.” The first responsibility of adults in the setting was seen as providing a “stimulating environment” in which the children could develop, and Jenni emphasised the way in which such an environment could provide opportunities for children’s own exploratory play by means of her notion of spontaneity. For Chris such opportunities arose from an environment which created a feeling of security:

(Only) if children feel safe and secure and happy with you are they going to respond on a level which says we are independent learners because we’re trusted, we’re cared for, we’re respected.

Chris’s notion of the child as an independent learner was emphasised at Bridge by children’s opportunities to explore and play consistently on their own terms. In the school’s written policy such opportunities were founded on the creation of time and space:

Time to experiment, create and reflect, time to be listened to by adults and time to actively engage with them. Space to use, organise and link materials in ways that they themselves choose, in a setting where learning through play is valued by adults and children alike.

Opportunities for children’s learning through play.

Opportunities for children to play freely in both settings could occur in a number of ways. It could take the form of moving from activity to activity and these opportunities provided ways in which children could experiment and seek out what interested them. Iqbal’s excitement at his first day in the nursery was exemplified by the way in which he wanted to explore activities which he did not yet know, as I recorded in my field notes:

Iqbal spent a lot of the first part of the morning just flitting. He was not bemused by the variety of activities but he seemed to want to experience them all in very quick succession. He went first to the jigsaw puzzles, not really doing any but taking the puzzles to bits. He was also fascinated by the trays in which construction activities were kept and at one point moved bits and pieces to other parts of the unit. He also wanted to play with the workbench which had been put out for the first time that morning. He did not recognise the need to wait his turn and merely moved in and wanted to use the hammer and nails. He also played on the computer and was thrilled when a picture with his name at the top was printed out. He kept wanting to tear it out of the printer before it was completely finished.

Opportunities for moving from activity to activity could also represent important ways in which children could begin to establish contact with other children at play. Aisha was spending the middle part of the afternoon playing outside. She began to move around other activities having first collected a pram from indoors. All the time she was looking round to see what other children were doing and moved towards groups of children engaged in various activities. She went to the sand pit where a number of children were playing and then to the large construction equipment where she spoke to a group of boys. She then moved away and after leaving the pram briefly to go indoors and speak to Sonia, returned and continued her sojourn with the pram, at one point going to speak again to the same group of boys. Significantly, Aisha was observed on a number of occasions doing the same thing with a pram. For her the need to absorb what was happening throughout the nursery was important in her decision making. More importantly for her it acted as a way of testing out relationships as she moved from group to group to establish who would accept her in their game. Pushing a pram validated this rapid movement from group to group.

Opportunities for children to spend time watching others at play represented an important means by which they were able to assess what would be likely to interest

them as well as a means of developing understanding and skills at second hand. It then enabled them to interact with those activities with some level of familiarity already established. Naveen spent much of his time watching other children involved in activities whether on their own or with others. On one occasion he was watching two girls playing with the smaller wooden blocks. After a time he collected some of his own and imitated what they were doing. At one point he even tried to take some of theirs but they took them back. After a few minutes the girls moved to other activities and Naveen was left to play on his own. He then became absorbed with the blocks for almost half an hour.

At Westside children were discouraged from standing and watching others at play. This discouragement took the form of an educator directing the child to find an activity with which she could become involved. These occasions created an impression that children were expected always to be busy and fully occupied. In this way important opportunities were lost for children to reflect on and make reasoned choices of activities which interested them and to observe the exploratory possibilities afforded by those activities.

Opportunities for children to collaborate with adults.

In both settings there were occasional opportunities for children to join with adults on a more extended basis although there were not corresponding opportunities in practice for bilingual children to use their community languages in that way. The opportunities for interaction were generally as a result of those activities planned and led by educators. For example, at Westside Linda had been cooking some mixed vegetables with a small group of children consisting of Iqbal, Sandra and Winston. When the vegetables were cooked Linda sat down with the children after having divided the food between three mugs and given each child a spoon. As they ate she asked them if they could remember which vegetables they used and which ones they liked the best. As the children finished they brought their mugs and spoons to the sink to be washed. On the other hand opportunities were not seized to develop collaborative teaching and learning by means

of the recognition of the teachable moments in the children's play. For example, There were instances of opportunities which could have been taken of collaborating informally with individual children as a means of developing their ideas and which came directly from the children's exploration of ideas in their play. Aisha was interested in the way the Osmiroid timers in the nursery worked and she took one into the playground to play with. She looked at the sand and pointed to it saying: "It's yellow" and then as the sand ran out into the lower compartment she pointed at the sand left over and said: "It's small." Attia, a normally solitary child (before the establishment of her friendship with Rabeela), was playing with the sticklebricks near me as I observed her. Although engrossed she nevertheless stopped and began to tell me about an event which had happened in the family and which she was keen to tell me about. She started by saying: "Nana's gone to Bangladesh." I then asked her about her family and she told me firstly: "Mummy, Nana and Daddy do the cooking." We then talked about getting up in the morning and she said: "In the holiday I can stay in bed but Nana tells mummy to get me up. Nana gets up early and then Mummy and then I get up before my sisters." As part of our conversation about getting up in the morning Attia told me that she liked the snow because she liked to see it when she woke up. She also told me that you can make a "nowman" with it. It had been snowing when I first visited Attia and her family at home. The following week Attia proudly told me that she had come to school that morning with her Nana who had returned from Bangladesh a few days before. Nana's absence and return were obviously of great importance to Attia and the opportunity to talk about it in a school setting allowed her not only to rehearse her feelings and anxieties about the fact that her grandmother was not with her but also enabled a potentially important emotional and educational connection to be made and developed. In this way the potential existed for Attia to advance her emotional world in the company of an adult who might have had a particular understanding of the familial and cultural significance of the absence of members of the family for periods of time and which occurred from time to time in her community. If Attia's experience of this feeling of loss at the absence of her grandmother could have been shared within the nursery

with an adult from her own community and possibly in her community language, the identification with school and its relevance for her in relation to her experiences might have been emphasised for her. However, in the absence of a suitable bilingual adult, opportunities nevertheless for the child to share her feelings and experiences on a consistent basis with an educator could have begun the process of developing shared emotional understandings. Such examples represented also ways in which the children were attempting to make their learning meaningful to themselves in relation to their interests and concerns.

Growth and Development.

Educators' professional growth and development.

The potential afforded by professional growth and development amongst educators in the settings could be represented, in the first instance, by a sense of achievement that the work of their schools had developed in ways which reflected their own management skills. For Rosalind and Chris this sense of achievement was established by themselves as headteachers. For Chris, this led her to believe that "the majority of things we changed and developed are right", a sentiment echoed in her turn by Rosalind:

I've moved quite a long way in management and I've learned some management strategies that I didn't have when I first went there and I don't think everything that's going on in my school is as I would want it, but I think my school perhaps can reflect the philosophy that I want it to reflect to a certain extent. I think I've changed my school. I've got a school that parents want to come to now.

An awareness of personal achievement could arise also from the recognition of others. During the course of the study Westside underwent a successful Ofsted inspection. For Jenni this provided a personal vindication of the way in which developments in the nursery unit had been carried through:

I feel vindicated because you go on courses and you reject things and you pick things out and I think we've done it through trial and error, we've tried things that people have suggested, we've thrown them out if they didn't work and we've incorporated things and so we feel it's our own system that we've made work. And I felt all along that was the important thing as long as you could justify what you were doing and make work what you'd got. If somebody said, "Could I have a look round?" I think I'd be quite happy and I think I'd have a bit of an edge now as well.

Another aspect of the potential afforded by an awareness of issues of growth and development was exemplified by Rosalind as a personal sense of power enabling her as a headteacher to introduce the kind of initiatives which would lead to the personal development of both staff and children:

The things that I like about being a headteacher are being able to create a school in the image that I wish for it to go forward, having that power to stop children from getting into stressful situations, that's very important for me, or having the power to make life better for those children and being able to help the staff with presentations and get them on courses and say, "I really think you could do a university degree and have you thought about it and I can pay for you." You wouldn't have that power as a teacher to develop your staff and do those things. I think in schools where you encourage staff development you get good quality staff, you get the kind of staff that you want, who actually want to think and reflect on practice, then you don't become stale and you're reflecting on new ideas and you want the kind of staff who want to do that.

Educators' approaches to children's growth and development.

The educators in both settings emphasised the importance of children developing knowledge and understanding. Jenni did not herself make any specific reference to the need for growth and development in children's learning, although, in the unit's policy

the concept was emphasised of creating an atmosphere "where each child realises their true potential". Rosalind, in her emphasis on the continuous and developmental nature of the activities in her nursery stressed that as a result the "things that the main emphasis is placed on in the nursery are the things where children can progress...and that's why the provision was chosen..." In this way progress and development was viewed as arising from a direct and personal engagement by children with a carefully constructed environment based on the principles which governed the philosophy of the school. At Bridge the way in which activities were designed to provide progress in children's learning was exemplified by the encouragement of individual children to return to the cooking area and make such items as scones, dough and crispies which were made out of Rice Krispies and chocolate. Over a period of time Naveen had been building a knowledge of the order in which a crispie was made. As a result he was beginning to follow instructions for making the cake. On one occasion he was observed making a crispie with the help of Kate and he was able to carry out some of the steps himself, for example, adding the Rice Krispies to the melted chocolate without being prompted. Kate asked him what he needed to do after he had mixed the ingredients and he replied correctly: "Cake case." She then asked him what he did with the case and he replied: "Put name on it." He was getting so used to the activity now that he was able to point at the sentence under the pictures in the recipe book and say: "That says." Three months later I observed him at the same table making dough with Mary (a nursery nurse). He began to explore the possibilities of the dough and to experiment with it and to use his imagination in an attempt to create something new out of the activity itself. He began to pull off pieces and to make them into different shapes. He made one piece into a sausage shape, announcing at the same time: "Look, I made a banana." He then made a ball shape and said: "An apple." After some experimentation with this he then picked off small pieces of dough and rolled them into balls which he informed Mary were apples. He then said: "I want a plate", fetched a saucer from a shelf nearby and began to arrange the small balls of dough on it, one of which he picked up and remarked: "It's a football."

The emphasis on continuity of provision for developmental reasons was in contrast to Westside, where, apart from the large apparatus and the standard provision such as the cutting and writing tables and jigsaws, most of the small construction toys were changed from session to session in the unit. In this way children could expect to encounter a variety of different apparatus on tables each day and alternative choices from the stored equipment were not directly encouraged, although generally children were allowed to take out alternative trays of constructional activities if they asked. However, on one occasion I observed Iqbal asking Anne if he could take out one of the trays, a request which was refused because "we're not playing with those today". Apart from the wish to provide children with a variety of small activities there was no further educational reason for this type of provision and educators were observed putting out small constructional and manipulative activities purely on the basis that they had not been available for the children for several days. In this way there was a potential for confusion and lack of continuity in several facets of the children's experiences, limiting the potential for development of learning.

Exploration and play.

The planning at both nurseries was generally content led and there were not reasons set out in the written planning as to why children were being invited to carry out activities, for example, what specific educational aims these activities represented. At Bridge the fact that children were encouraged to engage with activities for as long as they desired placed a significant burden on the ability of the observation and organisation systems to identify the point at which provision should be developed in order to address individual children's progression. In this way it placed a particular burden on the educator's observational vigilance (Hutt et al, 1989, p.231). This could lead in practice to educators failing to pick up the educational clues which children were revealing in the progress of their learning. For example, in Chapter 3 I discussed how play has been viewed as one of a network of experiences which represent the source of children's learning (Vygotsky, 1978, p.101), characterised by Bruce (1991) and Hutt et al (1989)

as embodying the exploratory and play phases of a child's interaction with a particular activity (see also Bruce, 1991, p.82). Some of the ways in which children in the settings engaged with the provision could be characterised as falling within these two phases and provided important instances of their educational development.

Naveen's play with the wooden blocks has already been mentioned in connection with gaining a way into an activity by means of watching other children. In this activity he established his personal ownership of what he was engaged with by means of a process of concentrated exploration in which the potential provided by the blocks was investigated. As he took the blocks out and fitted them together on the floor he began to make a pattern of long blocks next to each other. In addition to the full length blocks he also used half blocks in pairs to fit in with those of a full length until he had constructed a pattern of blocks similar to a wooden floor. Next he added blocks round the edges to make a frame and then began making a similar pattern of blocks on top of the ones he had already constructed. This phase of Naveen's interaction with the blocks represented for him a personal exploration in which he gained competence in using the apparatus to experiment with the patterns and shapes of which the blocks were capable. In this way he moved from exploring the concept of "What does this *object* do?" (Hutt et al, 1989, p.221) to "What can *I* do with this object?" (ibid, p.221). Having reached the stage of playing with the apparatus he fetched the play people and some plastic vehicles and put miniature people in each vehicle which he then drove on the grid of blocks he had just completed making comments as he did so, for example: "The baby's going in the lorry" as he fitted a figure in the tractor, and, "All this stuff is going on" as he put the vehicles on the blocks in a line. After having done that he picked up some of the vehicles and announced: "Going to put these in the sand." This activity represented for Naveen not only an opportunity for concentrated involvement on his own behalf but a means by which he could explore and develop a variety of concepts including matching, comparison, space, shape and the early ideas of area as well as imaginative storying as he played with the vehicles and play people. He also set out to verbalise some of his ideas and to draw meaning from relating talk to his actions. In this way the

opportunities for Naveen to explore and play with what was meaningful to him at that time emphasises the importance of a continuity of provision within a carefully planned and relevant curriculum, allowing for development of knowledge and understanding.

At Bridge, these types of activities were viewed as play, as a result of which the ways in which children were able to use objects and apparatus for exploration and then employ them in their play did not form part of the educators' observations. In this way particular aspects of the ways in which children's thinking changed in relation to these activities were not recognised. At Westside, because there were no observations of the children's play, opportunities were lost to note the strategies children were using to develop their cognitive thinking and knowledge.

Schematic behaviour.

In addition to the development of children's knowledge and understanding through the medium of their exploration and play, other aspects of their observable patterns of learning were noted, in particular, their use of schemas, which I discussed in Chapter 3. At Bridge, there was an awareness of children's use of schemas as observable patterns of developmental learning, forming an important source of understanding of children's behaviour in their interaction with the nursery environment. Observations included notes of the use of schemas by individual children and formed part of the daily review of planning by educators.

Representational schemas were manifested in a number of ways by children in their drawings and paintings with developing sophistication which tended to correspond with the examples of schematic representation suggested by Meade with Cubey (1995, p.18). For example, a number of children at Westside had made books connected with the termly topic of "Ourselves", consisting of drawings of members of their families. Attia and Zeeshad had drawn pictures of themselves, their mother and father and their sisters and brothers. All the people drawn by Attia consisted of triangles to represent their bodies with circles for their limbs connected by straight lines. Mouths were

enclosed crescent shapes. Zeeshad drew his bodies as a series of circles including arms which consisted of a line of connected circles. Other children had used individual ways of representing people in their books. Another child's people consisted, like Zeeshad's, of circles to represent the body and head, but hands and fingers were loops connected to the main body. He had drawn his dog in a similar way. Another child had developed the idea of circles and loops by adding lines and circles within the bodies to represent clothing and facial features. Javidul, on the other hand, remained at the stage of drawing people as series of spiral circles. These drawings exemplified the way in which children found ways of approximating their representations by means of the "attentional persistence" (ibid, p.18) which characterised their schematic approaches to their drawings. The level of the development of these representations was manifested by the sophistication of the schemas the children were using.

Action schemas could be manifested by children over a selection of practical activities. For example, Tariq was observed developing a variety of activities. These included making a tall man out of Duplo, building a tower with large plastic bricks and on another occasion with a magnetic construction kit, using plastic fit together shapes with Tony to make a long rod which they held up to compare their heights and building a tower from the block programme on the computer. Each of these activities involved Tariq in building vertically manifesting a consistent tendency to do this representing at the same time a pattern of behaviour which could be said to represent a dynamic vertical schema (ibid, p.18).

The lack of observations at Westside of children's schematic behaviour meant that these aspects of children's development remained unrecognised or misunderstood by the educators. The occasion of Tariq and Tony playing together provides an example, not only of children cooperating in manifesting schematic forms of behaviour, but also of the way in which such behaviour can be misinterpreted by adults. The boys had been experimenting with the vertical properties of a long rod which they had constructed from small interlocking plastic blocks. They began by comparing the rod vertically with

their own heights and after adding more pieces they noticed and remarked that it began to bend. In testing the rigidity of the rod they began to walk with it round the nursery eventually moving into the other play area at the back of the unit where the rod broke. At this point they were told by Jenni to return with it to the table where they had made it. They built the rod again adding still more pieces and after watching it bend again they moved with it round the unit returning to the play area at the back. On this occasion another member of staff broke the rod in two and told the boys to return with the pieces to their table. The negative response of the educators to what Tariq and Tony had perceived as an important process of exploration and development meant that within the context of this example of schematic experimentation an essential teachable moment had been lost at the expense of control and discipline which on this occasion appeared to take on a greater status within the life of the nursery.

Collaborative teaching and learning.

The importance of observing, recognising and acting upon the ways in which the children developed their knowledge and understanding as a result of their play represented one way in which educators could play an active role in the process of teaching and learning. The other was the way in which opportunities could be taken to interact and collaborate with children as a process of negotiating shared meanings and understandings or "common knowledge" (Edwards and Mercer, 1987). Such opportunities occurred generally in the activities which educators carried out in collaboration with groups of children. I have already examined the limitations to these opportunities at Westside arising from the tendency for those group activities to be disembedded from children's interests and skills. Group activities at Bridge however were generally based on activities in which children were invited to participate if they so wished. In this way there were more opportunities to develop skills and knowledge as a result of personal interest. The making of green tomato chutney by a group of children with Kate provided an example of the potential which such an activity had when an adult was present to facilitate skills and understanding of processes. The children were

all three year olds and Kate had purposely invited a particular girl, Ranjit, to join in because she was not speaking at present and Kate hoped that including her would encourage her to join in with others. She developed the activity by showing the children actual tomato plants and talking to them about tomatoes going red, pointing out on the plants both green and red tomatoes. She then demonstrated how to cut up a tomato and then the children repeated this with a small supply of their own. During this part of the activity Kate encouraged the children to taste the tomatoes and Brian sorted his tomatoes in a row by size before he attempted to cut up any of them. The children then cut the apples into small pieces. Kate showed the children how to cut the onions and Ranjit and Brian elected to do this. Their eyes stung and Kate discussed with the children why this was. Ranjit cut open the bag of sugar for the chutney and the ingredients were weighed one by one by the children, Kate showing them initially how the scales worked. Brian then measured out the vinegar into a jug while the children watched. After this the children took it in turns to put the ingredients in the pan and they went with Kate to the kitchen to cook the chutney. Kate's mode of interaction with the children had been in the main by means of instructions and questions. However, with Kate's presence and help the children had been able to practise not only a variety of manipulative skills and to engage with her practically and linguistically but had also been encouraged to take an interest in the processes which would perhaps provide them with the impetus to return to the same table which was always available in its crispie or dough making forms.

Woods and Jeffrey (1996) suggest that in the process of developing children's understandings, "common knowledge" represents not only cognitive knowledge but knowledge based around societal and cultural understandings:

Some common knowledge is developed between pupils and teachers that relates directly to the pupil's identity, such as facing challenges, managing social relations, co-operation and methods of decision making (p.121).

Cultural and language diversity.

In the context of the nursery environment the development of skills associated with independence, confidence and personal responsibility in children's play represent essential ways in which the interaction between educator and child has the potential to create important opportunities for the development of social as well as cognitive understanding. For bilingual children an awareness of their own cultural and linguistic identities and their status and relevance in the relationship between adult and child represents an indispensable way in which their "prior knowledge" (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p.118) can be employed as a basis for moving forward their own understandings and skills. In the final analysis, despite the apparent awareness in policies and expressed opinions by educators of the importance of prior knowledge in relation to bilingual children's development, in practice both the limited provision for cultural diversity and the lack of a consistent commitment to the status of community languages in the work of the settings represented a serious drawback to opportunities for bilingual learners to use their knowledge as developmental tools on their own behalf and in the context, as I have discussed in Chapter 4, of the maintenance and growth of cultural and linguistic identity in relation to their families and communities.

Conclusion.

In this chapter I have employed characteristics of creative teaching and learning to describe and assess the work of the educators in the settings. As part of this assessment I placed the ideas of creative teaching and learning in the context of both the constraints and opportunities for the educators' pedagogies arising from the process of intensification of their work which to varying degrees in the settings they had experienced as a result of recent educational legislation.

I argued that despite the experience of intensification there were in both settings examples of creative teaching and learning which provided an important potential for school improvement, for example, at Bridge, in particular, the emphasis on free play

and how by means of the way it was organised it provided a number of opportunities for children to develop their confidence and independence. However, as I have shown, in both settings the models of creative teaching and learning were inconsistent. For the schools' bilingual learners there were serious limitations placed on their ability to gain ownership of their learning and to use and develop their significant skills in environments which, in practice, failed to recognise those skills and to transform already existing practice accordingly.

Having described the views of both parents and educators and examined the practice in the nurseries it is now necessary to reach conclusions as a result of this study and to make recommendations for possible interventions by the two nurseries in the development of their work with their bilingual learners.

Chapter 6: Child-Meaningful Learning in Two Nursery Settings: Conclusions and Recommendations to Schools.

Introduction.

In this final chapter I will summarise the research in the nurseries and bring together my findings drawn from the observations and interviews which I carried out and which were discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. I will argue that as a result of the research there were a number of issues in the schools relating to policy and practice on behalf of their bilingual learners which would benefit from a review in order to develop the quality of children's learning.

I will summarise the findings of the research under two main headings. I will firstly review the work of the educators using the framework of creative teaching and learning which I employed in Chapter 5. I will summarise those occasions on which examples of creative teaching and learning were observed both in policy, in the ideas of the educators and in practice in the classroom. I will suggest that these occasions could provide a potential basis for school improvement. I will then summarise those instances where the educators' policies and practices failed to satisfy the requirements of creative teaching and learning. In this section I will also draw on the experiences of the parents which I examined in Chapter 4 to emphasise the significance of relevance in relation to provision for cultural and language diversity. As a result of my findings I held a series of meetings with Chris, Jenni and Rosalind to report the research and to make suggestions as to how the educators in the settings might develop strategies for intervening in the policy and practice of their schools. I will discuss the recommendations which I made to them and which embrace the findings described in this section. At this stage I will summarise the responses of the educators to my recommendations.

In the following section I will summarise the policies and views of the educators in relation to the role of parents and the communities in the work and life of the schools. I will argue that the lack of a consistent commitment to the concept of parental involvement had a detrimental effect on the ability of the settings to forge educational and cultural links with their families and communities and to use their knowledge for the benefit of the children. I will then describe the potential for parental and community involvement built on the research carried out into learning communities by Cocklin (1996) and Cocklin, Coombe and Retallick (1996). I will end this section by summarising the recommendations which I made to the schools in order to encourage closer links with their parents and communities.

I will end the chapter by describing, firstly, additional considerations to be taken into account in making recommendations to the schools, secondly, the ways in which the methods I used in my research helped the development of my understanding of the educational issues and, finally, the responses of the educators to the nature and conduct of the research as a whole.

Aspects of Creative Teaching and Learning - Findings.

In the previous chapter I argued that on a number of occasions there were examples of creative teaching and learning in the settings which emphasised the potential existing in the schools for school improvement. It is these particular examples which I will now summarise.

Creative Teaching and Learning in Policy and Practice.

Several of the characteristics of creative teaching and learning which were manifested at Bridge arose substantially from Rosalind's ownership of her educational ideas which was seen to provide a purpose and continuity to the practice in her school. These ideas embraced the notion of "intentionality" (Alexander, 1995, p.35) in which she was clear in her understanding of the thinking underlying her philosophy, deriving directly from the belief in the predominance of the principles of free-flow play. This, in its turn

reflected contemporary ideas of the importance of play in children's learning (for example, Bruce, 1991; Nutbrown, 1994; David, 1990, 1992). The use of free play was also in evidence at Westside, providing in its turn examples of creative teaching and learning. However, as I suggested in Chapter 5, Rosalind's exposition of her educational ideas were translated into a practical vision which to a substantial degree gave her pedagogy a sense of direction and commitment. I also argued that this same sense of direction, coupled with her position as headteacher provided her with a determining control over the direction of her pedagogy in her school. I discussed also how in both settings, where free play, based on freely chosen activities, was used as a tool for teaching and learning children were able to begin to experience confidence and independence, as a result of which, there was potential for their ownership of their learning. At Bridge, this sense of ownership was given added significance by the fact that the routines and organisation of the school, because they were designed to enable children to interact freely with the nursery environment with minimum restrictions, resulted in a large measure of control by the children over their learning.

I also examined the importance of relevance in creative teaching and learning in the context of the way in which, where it enables children's learning to reflect their societal and cultural knowledge, it becomes "personal knowledge" (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p.116). I suggested in Chapters 3 and 5 that for bilingual children free play provides opportunities for them to apply and adapt their own cultural knowledge to create relevant experiences by means of the free interaction which play provides (Moyles, 1994; David, 1992). At Bridge, in particular, because of the predominance of free play, the potential for those particular opportunities was particularly strong. I also examined the importance educationally of the concepts, firstly, of a physical provision reflecting the diversity of cultures represented in the settings and, secondly, the centrality of collaborative teaching and learning and its relevance culturally and linguistically to the schools' bilingual children. It was seen that there was a commitment in policy and practice and a few examples of initiatives taken in both settings to create an environment which endeavoured to address the issue of cultural relevance. It was seen that some

features of the physical provision which attempted to reflect the different cultures represented in the schools and the celebration of religious and cultural festivals provided opportunities for children and parents to take part in those aspects of the cultural life of the settings. In addition children were never discouraged from using their community languages in school and the fact that both Nadia and Sonia as community language speakers were employed in the settings meant that a potential existed for the development of cultural and linguistic concerns in the curriculum of each school. It was seen that particularly at Bridge the predominant nature of the provision for free play enabled opportunities for innovative teaching and learning to take place, founded on the variety of ways in which the children were able to interact with their environment.

In Chapter 5 I described two further aspects of creative teaching and learning which my study of the settings had indicated: opportunity, and growth and development. I suggested that both headteachers viewed their function as providing opportunities for their staff to develop their roles as educators to the full within a supportive environment, and it was seen that Jenni was anxious to create a culture of collaboration with her nursery nurses. In addition, I suggested that within correspondingly supportive environments the educators felt committed to providing opportunities for children to develop their full potential as learners. I concluded that there were examples of opportunities for children to follow their interests in both settings and to engage in important learning experiences, especially at Bridge where the provision of these types of opportunities were central to the setting's physical provision.

I suggested in Chapter 5 that central to the notion of creative teaching and learning was the idea that for both educators and children there should be a sense of personal momentum founded on the growth and development of personal knowledge, understanding and skills. Rosalind, Jenni and Chris had experienced this, whether it was a recognition of the development of personal management skills, as with Rosalind, or a sense of vindication resulting from a successful school inspection, as with Jenni and Chris. It was seen in addition that Rosalind, in particular, was aware of her role in

encouraging and furthering staff development. The potential for growth and development in children's learning was seen to be particularly encouraged in both settings where children were given the opportunity to manifest developmental skills and patterns of behaviour, including exploration and play and different forms of schemas.

Emerging from an examination of the settings was that for bilingual children a commitment to free play provided the potential for examples of creative teaching and learning. This emphasised the importance of play and its role in the development of knowledge and understanding for all children, including bilingual children, in early years settings. I suggested, however, that there were substantial limitations to the models of creative teaching and learning in both settings.

Limitations to Creative Teaching and Learning.

I examined in Chapter 5 how in contrast to Rosalind, both Jenni and Chris possessed a less clearly defined pedagogy which, in practice, threw doubt on their understanding and ownership of what they were espousing. Despite the idea that Jenni's trial and error approach to the curriculum potentially satisfied the notion of a pluralist mode of teaching (Alexander, 1997, p.271) her pedagogy revealed a lack of clarity in the reasoning behind the juxtaposition of free play and directed activities and the emphasis placed on the importance of the latter at the expense of the former. In practice, the overwhelming importance placed on structured activities through their exclusive role in the planning and assessment in the unit placed in doubt Jenni's commitment to play as a source of cognitive development, despite her expressed belief in the importance of spontaneity in teaching and learning. As a result, important sources of learning for all children, including bilingual children, were being ignored.

I described how for both Jenni and Rosalind the nature and extent of control over their pedagogies possessed certain limitations in the context of their settings. For Jenni, it was seen that there were substantial limitations to her control of the unit's pedagogy arising from the pressures which she felt to prepare her children for the transition to the

school's reception class, exemplified by her substantial incorporation of the National Curriculum into the unit's policies. Rosalind's personal ownership of her school's pedagogy and her belief that the final decisions regarding policy needed to stay under her control meant that her staff were potentially excluded from taking a fully active part in decision making regarding policy. As a result there was a need created for Rosalind to develop means by which she could share decisions with her staff regarding the practical effectiveness of her educational vision.

I emphasised in Chapter 5 how opportunities for control by children over their learning arose directly from attitudes towards the function and nature of play in the settings. I described how, in this context, resourcing for play differed in the nurseries, as exemplified by the difference in provision for painting activities. In addition, it was seen that the organisation and routines of the nurseries reflected also this difference of approach. Again, the organisation of the unit at Westside exemplified the way in which the influence of the main school had permeated the pedagogy of the unit, reflected in the beginnings of the preparation of children to become proper pupils as part of their subsequent move to the school.

In the study of the settings, the notion of relevance in creative teaching and learning became a particularly important issue in policy and practice with regard to bilingual learners and I have already emphasised the importance of free play in this respect. It was seen that the status given to structured activities at Westside diminished the idea of a curriculum which was relevant because it required the bilingual children to adapt to a form of provision which was disembedded from their interests and which created severe limitations on their abilities to bring their particular cultural and linguistic knowledge to bear on their activities. In addition, the lack of observation of and planning for free play largely precluded potentially relevant experiences from becoming part of the mainstream of the curriculum.

The attempts by the settings to provide for different cultures represented an incomplete approach, exemplified by the limitations culturally in the physical provision. In the

context of the issue of relevance I described also the settings' approaches to issues of collaborative teaching and learning and thereby the importance of community languages. In neither setting was there in practice a commitment to systematic interaction with children in their activities as a tool for teaching and learning, despite isolated examples of extended conversations between adults and children and in formal educator led activities. In addition, this same shortcoming was reflected in attitudes in practice towards community languages, despite educators' expressed commitment to their use. In this way there was a sense of a curriculum in each setting which lacked inclusiveness and failed to recognise the potential for learning provided by children's cultural knowledge and understanding. It was seen also in the study that there was a limited approach in policy and practice towards issues of racism in the schools.

As a result of my findings I examined why, despite an expressed commitment in policy to cultural diversity, these policies had not been substantially translated into practice. I concluded that this shortcoming arose from a fundamental lack of empathy towards and understanding of the cultures represented in the settings, causing severe limitations in the ability of the schools to establish a coherent curriculum for their bilingual learners which possessed relevance for them. I also emphasised that out of the resultant gulf emerged a sense in which the curriculum of each setting was owned by the educators and not the children. This same gulf emerged from my interviews with parents. In Chapter 4, it was seen that, despite the parents' desire to engage with the educational world of their children's nurseries, tensions were created for them as their children's confidence in English increased in school, a confidence which in educational terms parents viewed as a necessity. However, this had the effect of increasing the use of English at home very often at the expense of their community languages and this became for the parents a struggle either for a reassertion of their children's use of their community language at home or for at least a balance between the two. It was also seen that the attempt by parents to reassert the children's use of their first language at home and within the community was given further significance by the fact that it was viewed as an important way in which culture was affirmed and validated. Validation of culture

was also asserted by the parents as being achieved by means of familial and community relationships which were sometimes viewed as being at odds with those current in English society. Above all, the impression left by the expression of these concerns was that gradually, not only were their children in danger of losing or rejecting their culture but that as a result the parents were slowly losing their children to an alternative set of values. In the final analysis the significance of the parents' expression of these concerns emphasised that their languages and cultures were not being afforded equal status within the culture of the nursery settings. It can be argued, therefore, that in order to begin the process of the development of a curriculum which is fully relevant to their bilingual children there was a need for the settings to begin the process of examining and redefining their policies and practices in relation to cultural and language diversity.

My examination in Chapter 5 of innovation in creative teaching and learning provided further evidence at Westside of the problems arising from the predominant status given to structured activities, leading to limited opportunities for educators to apply innovative techniques to their teaching and for the children as a result to develop their knowledge and understanding in correspondingly innovative ways. In my examination of opportunity, and growth and development in creative teaching and learning there were two further aspects of practice in the settings which, despite the commitment in policy, led to limitations in the ability of bilingual children to develop their knowledge and understanding. Firstly, in examining the potential for the growth and development of children's learning, I emphasised the way in which free play enabled children to manifest modes of behaviour which possessed significance for their learning, whether they included the delineation between exploration and play, or schematic patterns of behaviour. I noted that not all of these clues were consistently noted by educators in the settings, especially at Westside. The other issue, which I have described in my discussion of relevance, was that related to collaborative teaching and learning. It was found that in neither settings were there consistent opportunities established in practice for children to engage with adults in collaborative teaching and learning on an informal and incidental basis which could have formed an important element of learning arising

from the immediacy of their play. This meant that there were limited opportunities for bilingual children to use their prior knowledge and to develop their skills in a climate of collaboration. In the context of these findings, therefore, it could be suggested that there was a necessity in both settings, especially Westside, for an exploration of ways of observing children's play systematically in order to identify, in the first instance, the extent and nature of ways in which children develop their learning and secondly opportunities for educators to join children in their activities, wherever appropriate, to introduce a more consistent collaborative aspect to teaching and learning.

Recommendations Made to the Schools.

The form and nature of the reports to the schools.

As a result of the research I made a report of the findings to Rosalind, Jenni and Chris, together with any recommendations which I had of ways in which the educators might intervene in their settings as part of a process of school improvement. In the first instance I decided to give an oral report to the educators in the belief that this would appear less formal and prescriptive than a written feedback. I considered also that it would give each educator and myself an opportunity to discuss each element of my recommendations and provide occasions for explanations and comments. However, having given an oral report I offered both Jenni and Rosalind a written summary of my recommendations together with any practical decisions we had reached regarding policy and practice. In the case of Chris, I reported to her the recommendations I had made to Jenni as well as any implications which those recommendations had for whole school policy. I also gave Chris a copy of the written report to Jenni and provided her with my recommendations in writing regarding whole school policy. The written recommendations are contained in Appendices 11, 12 and 13 of this study. The nature and tone of the reports varied according to the teacher I was addressing. In the case of Rosalind, our professional relationship allowed for a more openly critical assessment of the school to be made. To some extent this was true of my report to Chris, in the sense that we had already known each other professionally for a number of years. In Jenni's

case, although we had established a mutual trust during the course of the study, I felt there was still a danger, because of my former position as a headteacher and the fact that Chris and I already knew each other, that if I was overtly critical it would be viewed by Jenni as a negative and personal challenge to her position as co-ordinator of the unit. For this reason it can be seen in Appendix 11 that my written report to Jenni mirrored the approach I took in my verbal report in that I was anxious to celebrate a number of the unit's achievements while at the same time not providing a lengthy list of suggestions for development. In this way I hoped to suggest that these developments could be viewed as building on existing practice wherever possible. The meetings in the first instance consisted of two separate discussions with Chris, the first lasting approximately two hours and the second approximately one hour, two one hour meetings with Jenni, one of which was held in my home and two meetings with Rosalind the first of which lasted approximately three hours and the second approximately an hour and a half. Each report was presented to the educators under three headings: Policy and Practice, Cultural and Language Diversity and Parental Involvement. This division of the findings and recommendations was designed to allow for clarity and to enable recommendations to be related specifically to particular aspects of the work of the schools. I was anxious in each report to list and celebrate what I considered to be those aspects of the work of the schools which were supporting and contributing towards teaching and learning. These aspects provided part of my preliminary comments under each section of the report (see Appendices 11 and 12). I now turn to my recommendations to the schools.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice.

The following is a summary of the recommendations which I made to Jenni at Westside with any decisions arising from them:

1. I suggested that she might consider extending her formal observations to include children's free play. The reasons for this were that such observations might enable the educators to plan the resources they put out for the children as well as to provide

opportunities to join individual children and talk with them on a more consistent basis. I suggested also that these observations might provide important information which could benefit planning for the unit's structured activities.

2. In connection with observations of free play I also suggested that use could be made of observations of particular models of behaviour in the ways children develop their knowledge and skills, for example schemas, in order to inform resourcing in the unit.
3. In developing resources for play I asked Jenni if there were any aspects of the nursery's provision which she was interested in developing. She said that she and her nursery nurses were interested in improving the equipment in the unit's kitchen so that children could reach the sink and worktops as part of the process of encouraging them to do more for themselves and thereby become more independent.

Jenni's responses to these issues included the following comments:

- She had not considered observations of and planning for free play in the unit but it was an issue which she would want to explore.
- She was interested in looking at other aspects of child development such as schemas.

As a result of our discussion we agreed the following courses of action:

- a) I would discuss with Chris the possibility of providing funding from the school's budget in order to develop the nursery's kitchen.
- b) I would provide Jenni with suitable material about schemas, in particular Meade with Cubey (1995) which provides a clear and systematic introduction to these forms of children's behaviour.

- c) I would also provide Jenni with the material on planning the curriculum in relation to free play prepared as part of the Effective Early Learning project (EEL) (see Pascal, Bertram and Ramsden, 1994; Bertram and Pascal, 1995; Ramsden, 1997).
- d) At our second meeting we decided that during the forthcoming Summer Term I would spend some time in the school helping Jenni to begin to carry out some of my recommendations, for example, joining with her and observing children's schematic behaviour during their play, followed by a joint analysis of what we had observed and looking at the resourcing possibilities arising from those observations.

In my subsequent meetings with Chris, she emphasised the need to continue developing close relationships with the nursery unit founded on a consistent sharing of ideas. In this way she would examine the possibility of funding for the kitchen. In addition, as a means of finding ways of sharing knowledge with the nursery she would ask Jenni to show her the materials which I had given to her.

I discussed also with Chris the question of the pressures which existed on the educators in the nursery to prepare children as pupils for their transition to the reception class. I emphasised that this was having an effect on the nature of some of the activities which were planned in the unit. Chris expressed an awareness of this and she recognised that it was a consequence of the influence of the National Curriculum which permeated the whole school. It was a factor which she regretted but felt it was inevitable. It has been suggested that this aspect of planning for the curriculum could form the basis of further research (Woods, Boyle and Hubbard, 1997).

In my report to Rosalind at Bridge I made the following recommendations:

1. In the context of the need to develop the potential for planning for consistent collaborative teaching and learning between children and adults I suggested that Rosalind could take advantage here of the work which the school was already carrying out as part of the Effective Early Learning project, with particular reference

to that section of the project concerned with assessing the quality of adult engagements with children in their play. I suggested that this could form part of a period of experimentation by herself and the staff to examine the potential for this initiative (this suggested process is described further in Appendix 12).

2. As part of the process of beginning to examine uses of language as a means of teaching and learning I recommended that educators could investigate and record through observations of play children's opportunities for interactions with each other, including their community languages. The work on the Effective Early Learning project concerned with assessing the level of children's involvement with the nursery provision could form the basis for this investigation.
3. In order to begin the process of encouraging her staff to identify with and gain a more active role in the development of Rosalind's pedagogy, I suggested that she could begin a series of staff meetings over a substantial period of time devoted to discussing policy and practice in the school. Again, the evaluation of practice built into the Effective Early Learning project could provide the occasion for establishing and maintaining these discussions.

The decisions for action related to these aspects of the recommendations formed part of the general decisions regarding the report and which are described in a later section of this chapter.

Recommendations for Cultural and Language Diversity.

In my report to Jenni I concentrated on recommendations which had directly practical implications for the day to day work of the unit. I considered that issues of policy possessed wider implications and could only be addressed successfully as part of a whole school approach. In this context I shared those particular aspects of my recommendations with Chris as headteacher.

1. I suggested to Jenni that Nadia as a bilingual nursery nurse could be used more actively in the unit as a source of developing the use and status of community languages and as an adviser on equipment and resources (see Appendix 11).
2. As part of a process of monolingual educators playing a more active personal role in the development of community languages I asked Jenni if she had thought of learning any words or phrases in community languages, such as greetings, as a way of developing important cultural relationships with the bilingual children in the unit as well as confirming that those cultures possessed a status with all educators in the setting.
3. I also asked Jenni if she had considered investigating the possibility of acquiring books which are written in community languages as well as those depicting Asian children and their families.

As a result of my recommendations Jenni made the following comments:

- The question of resourcing was an issue which she considered important to investigate, subject to the restrictions on the unit's budget.
- Jenni expressed some personal reservations about the development of community languages as a central part of the curriculum of the unit, reservations which she had not voiced as directly before. She considered that their encouragement was important but not at the expense of developing the children's competence in English.

In my subsequent discussions with Chris regarding my recommendations to Jenni, she commented as follows:

- She felt that in relation to the children speaking community languages the problem was that most of the parents wanted their children to be speaking English at school. I mentioned some of the findings of my interviews with the parents and the tensions

which they experienced with regard to community languages and English. She agreed with this.

- Therefore, she did accept that the children should have the opportunity to use their community languages and that there should be good role models for this. For example, there was a wealth of bilingual adults in the school who could be encouraged to use their skills in mother tongue stories and to provide opportunities for bilingual children to talk with them in their community languages.

Concerning the implications of the research findings on the school as a whole I began by suggesting that a development of policy could take place within the school as a whole (details of these suggestions are contained in Appendix 13).

At this stage of our discussion Chris raised the issue of excessive workload which she and the staff were experiencing in increasing degrees. As a result she felt pessimistic about the short term possibilities of this kind of development of policy because, as she remarked, "there is so much coming at us at the moment." Chris cited a number of examples, including the school's work on base line assessment, the local education authority's request that the school should be developing strategies for the encouragement of different forms of children's writing and the work which the staff were carrying out for the introduction of the literacy and numeracy hours by the beginning of the next academic year. Chris's response to this volume of work was that, "There is so much I don't know the deadlines any more." She felt that in relation to these issues the "teachers want this sorted out now", and she felt that it would be unreasonable to ask them to embrace discussions about further policy reviews in the immediate future. Chris's response once more raises the issue of the pressures which form part of teachers' experiences of intensification and the way in which it is expressed through the colonisation of their time (Hargreaves, 1994, p.113). It also exemplifies the nature of the demands being made on schools for centrally controlled

systems and the way in which issues of cultural and language diversity can be marginalised as a result.

In my report to Rosalind at Bridge I made the following recommendations:

1. I suggested that a process of review could take place with regard to the multi-cultural education policy of the school. As previously with my recommendations concerning policy and practice this review could be built initially around the Effective Early Learning project framework which includes suggestions for interviews with all members of the school community, including staff, parents, governors and ancillary staff, in order to ascertain their perceptions and views of school policy. This would represent the first stage in a whole school review of policy within the school as part of a process of moving eventually towards an anti-racist school policy. The procedure I outlined was similar to my suggestions for Westside and, in including consultations with parents and the community, would give the resultant policy some inclusiveness and effectiveness. The process of drawing in the community could be by means of the mothers' and toddlers' group and the parent governors.
2. I recommended that Sonia could play a more active role in raising the status of cultural diversity and community languages in the school (details of these suggestions are contained in Appendix 12).
3. As with Westside I suggested that community cultures could be given more credibility and status by the encouragement of monolingual educators learning at least a few words and phrases of the community languages represented in the setting and to encourage the children to teach the educators words and phrases as part of the process of collaborative teaching and learning.
4. As part of the process of drawing the community into the work of the school I also recommended that the school could investigate ways of inviting members of the community, including parents, to work with children in school.

5. I also recommended that there should be a review of resources in the school, whose intention would be to examine their relevance culturally.

Rosalind made the following comments regarding my recommendations:

- She agreed that a review of school policy should take place and that members of the community should be invited to take part in the process.
- Rosalind also agreed that Sonia's role in the school could become more directly related to her skills as a bilingual educator, particularly in encouraging children to use their community languages.
- With regard to the development of some knowledge of community languages amongst monolingual educators and the encouragement of the children's use of their first languages in school, Rosalind agreed with this concept. In fact, she and another member of staff had begun attending a course on Learning to Learn in a Second Language. This consisted of issues of assessment and developing a curriculum for bilingual learners. She felt that this course would enable her to gain more understanding of different cultures as a result of which she would be in a better position to review some of the curriculum issues. Rosalind emphasised, however, that for the three year olds the issue of being able to talk their community languages was not as central because their language would not be that developed. The issue would be more important once the children became four. I suggested that, nevertheless, for the three year olds to hear their community languages being spoken by children and adults would mean that their transition from home to school would be smoother. In this way it would help their cultural self-esteem and would make them more willing to engage with the culture of the nursery. This was a suggestion which she accepted as being part of the necessity of such provision.

The Role of Parents and the Community.

In the section on relevance in creative teaching and learning I described how the parents' concerns for their children within the settings highlighted the importance of addressing cultural and language diversity in the curriculum. In addition, I concluded that there were limitations to the educators' empathy with and understanding of the cultures represented in the settings. This in turn emphasised the importance for the schools of finding ways of drawing on the knowledge and understanding by the parents of their own cultures reflected both in their own children and in their communities.

School policies towards parents and the community.

In neither set of policies were there references to the role of the schools in their respective communities or conversely to the contribution which the communities could make to the schools. Although Jenni did not mention this, Rosalind was aware of what she viewed as her own shortcomings in the lack of contact with the local community arising from her desire for her school to become what she described as a community school:

I don't feel my school has enough contact with the community. I feel the school should be a real community school and as much part of the community and valued by the community, but I tried to get the community in, it is just very difficult, because I don't speak all the languages, I mean that doesn't help. I think I haven't been a figure in the community enough myself and perhaps I'm not skilled enough to see all the ways I could get into the community.

There were, however, in the policies of the nurseries and the educators' ideas, an expressed belief in building relationships with the parents of children in their settings. At Westside this was expressed as a desire to create a stimulating environment which would be interesting to children and adults in the hope that this "will enhance our aim to establish good relationships with the children's families." The practical role of the parents was viewed in the policy as being an opportunity to "make a contribution to the

work of the unit by “making labels in Mother Tongue, and lending artefacts etc..” At Bridge this relationship was described in the written policy as a form of partnership, although the nature of this was not specified:

Staff also aim to work in partnership with all parents valuing their special knowledge of their child and his/her learning experiences. Parents have many skills that they can share with us thus enriching the life of the school. It is important for children to see parents and teachers working together in a strong positive relationship.

Jenni echoed this view of educators and parents working together:

You’re asking the parents really to bring them (their children) to the door and go, whereas in fact it perhaps needs to be more of a combined learning thing, parents and teachers, working together.

Practical co-operation with parents was viewed, on the one hand, as an opportunity for the schools to find ways of supporting parents, whether it was in the mothers’ and toddlers’ group at Bridge or the kind of personal support at Westside, described by Jenni:

Quite a lot of them do come, I mean we have one mother who’s having trouble with her husband and she climbs out of the kitchen window because he’s locked her in and she came in and we said, “Oh come in, have a cup of tea, have a play”, really when you’ve got parents involved anyway, counselling becomes one of the skills, doesn’t it?

As part of this concept of personal support, it was significant, however, that generally this was represented, as Nadia remarked, by the regularity with which parents approached her as a member of the community rather than other members of staff in order to discuss their children and to gain information about the school.

It was in the schools' views of parents as educators, especially in the context of a narrow perception of them as helpers in the classrooms that an alternative idea of the relationship between parents and educators emerged. To some extent Rosalind recognised that parents possessed special knowledge of their children, but it was not a knowledge which extended to the children when they were in school:

Parents first of all know their own child far better than we can ever know them, they may not know them in the institution better but they know them far better,

In her description of the role of parents in the classroom, the nature of their knowledge was not delineated, although it was not a directly educational knowledge:

I think they can be used to do a number of things under our direction, not just cutting paper, they can come in and cook with the children and read stories with the children. If I was going to ask them to do a very skilled job like the woodwork or the cookery I would want to perhaps talk it through with them first. We have a lot to learn from parents and other people who are sensitive to children, we have one view as professionals but parents have another view and if there were things that I actually didn't want a parent to do I would discuss that with them, like don't draw it for them or whatever it is, don't make the plan for them, talk to them about a plan, but I still think they can do a lot.

Liz echoed this notion of parents as helpers, emphasising also the degree to which educators had to prepare parents for this role, which in its turn involved staff in additional time.

Jenni expressed doubts about the role of parents in the daily life of the nursery, not only from a social viewpoint, but also from her view of the limitations of their educational knowledge:

Sometimes it's a good idea if parents come in and play with their children, sometimes it's not a good idea. I mean some people you wouldn't want to be in

with the children. I'm very wary about the parents who come in and say, "Can I have some worksheets to do the alphabet at home?", or, "We're going on holiday, can they have the next maths book and things?"

In contrast to these views I discussed in Chapter 4 how the parents interviewed were guardians of a substantial amount of knowledge of their own children and were themselves active as educators. As such they possessed much knowledge and skill with which to offer the two nursery settings just as the settings possessed expertise which could benefit the ways in which parents engaged with their own children educationally.

The views of the educators can be seen, therefore, to represent a particular viewpoint in which they considered themselves to possess a position of power through professional knowledge which precluded the active role of parents as partners on behalf of their children. Where a relationship did exist it was viewed by the educators as one in which they remained in control, either by means of providing support or instructing parents in the classroom. These views echo my suggestion in Chapter 5 that a sense existed in the settings that the curriculum belonged to the nurseries and their educators, and not to the children.

A few parents came into Bridge to help or support on an occasional basis but there was no regular input. No parents came into the unit at Westside to contribute to the work of the nursery. This lack of consistent support in both settings was a measure of the opportunities which still awaited the schools to find ways of forging crucial links with the families of their communities.

The potential of learning communities.

It has been argued that the potential benefits to teaching and learning provided by the knowledge of their children by parents emphasises the necessity of providing a variety of means by which that information together with the skills of the parents could be employed to the full in nursery settings on a systematic basis if that is what individual

parents want. Such an involvement could cement a strong and mutually beneficial relationship between teachers and parents:

In a partnership that involves trust and ease of communication, teachers stand to gain important information from parents that may assist in developing programmes for future learning. Parents who are better informed and aware of the activities of the school will be stronger supporters and thus become important public relations speakers for the school (Little & Meighan, 1995, p.31).

Recent research on the potential of what has been described as “learning communities” has emphasised the mutual benefits arising from partnerships between schools and their parents and communities, for example, Cocklin (1996); Cocklin, Coombe and Retallick (1996) and their research into the Rana Primary School in Australia. They suggest that the potential for the development of the learning community is built around the desire for “school renewal” (Cocklin, Coombe and Retallick, 1996, p.3). To maximise this potential for renewal and development the school firstly moves outwards to its community in order to create a collaborative culture in which all participants act as teachers and learners:

No longer is learning solely the domain of those vested with power in a hierarchy of knowledge relationships, but requires the interactive involvement of families and children, as well as principals, teachers and administrators (ibid, p.3).

This concept embraces the notion of teachers, parents, children and communities joining together in a relationship of “working together” and “working with” as teachers and learners as they exchange social and educational information and ideas (Cocklin, 1996, p.3). For parents and children the active participation through a partnership with the school provides them with a sense of belonging and ownership, reflecting itself in

the children's learning situation (Cocklin, Coombe and Retallick, 1996, p.5). Teachers in the learning community possess a dual role in that they:

...take more responsibility as learning leaders for the children and the school community. They are also leading learners as they find themselves learning with and from the children and community (ibid, p.4).

This dual role creates the potential for school improvement based on a process of "restructuring" which guides "the efforts of individual schools, teachers and their communities in the quest to improve as best they can, within their own settings" (Hargreaves, 1994, p.259).

The development of a learning community based on a partnership has the capability of moving beyond the sharing of information and knowledge to become a participatory relationship particularly within the school itself. For example, the participation of parents in the work of the school has formed the traditional form of collaboration. However, the notion of participation has the ability to move beyond the traditional idea of parent/teacher co-operation as being merely a relationship in which parents act as 'assistants for teachers' (Little and Meighan, 1995, p.18), to become instead what Torkington (1986) describes as a parent-centred approach to parental involvement in school which she suggests represents one of three approaches (p.13). The first is a curriculum-centred approach in which parents act as 'assistants for teachers' helping to develop the cognitive skills of children in school by means of such tasks as listening to children read, and in the nursery setting, helping children to carry out structured activities such as sticking or colouring. It is an approach which means that the teacher is the dominant figure in the classroom directing the parent. The second approach is the school-centred approach in which parents help the school to fulfil its broader educational objectives. In this approach parents will help the school in fund raising, organising parent/teacher associations, or acting as parent governors (Nutbrown, 1994, p.141). Torkington considers the third approach, the parent-centred approach, as coming nearest to providing a true partnership between the parent and the school:

The rationale for the parent-centred approach is that parents' knowledge of their individual children is far greater than that of a teacher and that the teacher's knowledge and skills about children and learning in general should merely complement and build on the specific knowledge that parents hold - both these aspects are equal and essential for learning to take place (1986, p.14).

Rennie (1996, p.193) suggests that a parent-centred approach to involvement in school provides a way in which practical help can be combined with a sharing of knowledge and expertise between teacher and parent for the benefit of the parents' child at home as well as at school:

Teachers and parents must recognize their own strengths. Teachers know how to work with groups, to organize learning materials, to create a learning environment. They need to use those skills to help bring the far greater knowledge parents have of their own children to bear and to encourage the parents to use such knowledge and experience as well as other skills which collectively parents are bound to have, with their children at home.

The active parent-centred approach to involvement in school can be viewed as particularly relevant in the case of bilingual children and their families. The cultural knowledge of bilingual parents actively involved in the work of the classroom is capable of providing the kind of cultural and language expertise which can contribute not only to the children's understanding but to that of the teachers also. In addition, that same expertise can be used by teachers to develop the kind of culturally relevant experiences within the setting. This type of partnership possesses the potential for enabling the educator to share her early years expertise with the parent within the context of developing the kind of skills which can be applied in a multilingual home environment. In this way the relationship can be transformative in the sense of each party to the relationship being developed and changed by the other.

An important question arising from the issue of parental involvement is which parents are likely to respond to a straightforward invitation to take part in activities in the classrooms? Despite some changes in the patterns of childcare and employment in the last few years (Little & Meighan, 1995, p.26) it may still be true that in the main mothers are more likely to be found taking an active part in nursery settings than fathers (Keating & Taylorson, 1996, p.32; David, 1990, p.130). As a consequence any nursery that wishes to involve parents generally may find it necessary to attempt to make home/school relationships more effective by targeting both parents if possible (Little & Meighan, 1995, p.26).

In addition it has been suggested that there may be parents who wish to support the nursery but lack the confidence and, what they perceive as, the knowledge to do so (David, 1990, p.126). In this way, settings may need to be aware of this when they are formulating programmes for parental involvement. A programme for involvement may also benefit from an awareness of the issue of equal opportunities for all parents (Nutbrown, 1994, p.139). The fact, for example, that many mothers will be in full-time employment will make attendance at school during session times difficult. Other parents, for example, ethnic minority parents, may find it difficult to enter the culture of the school and find common ground culturally or educationally with the educators in that setting. Some of these parents may well be those who find the particular social outlooks of the settings alienating. It can be argued therefore that the setting may need to be sensitive to this when formulating a programme and include mechanisms for developing a dialogue based on the acceptance of common social and educational values in which the educators not only explain the methods of the nursery setting but are sensitive, for example, to the educational experiences of ethnic minority parents, if they have been gained in another country (Siraj-Blatchford, 1994, p.103). It can also be argued that it could be important also for the parents in these circumstances to feel that educators are taking them seriously and are interested in them as individuals for their own sake (ibid, p.94). The danger in any programme of involvement can be that it is seen to be restricted to certain parents only who already have some status in the school.

In this way a deficit model of certain parents can be created which precludes them from access to the school in any supportive way.

Any effective programme of parental involvement could result not only in an extensive level of co-operation between educators and parents but could also mean that the full extent of knowledge and understanding about children is being used for the benefit of those same children. Other benefits for the children could include an increase of confidence as they see more adults supporting them in school and are more likely to benefit as parents bring educational skills they have learned back into the home (Rennie, 1996, p.201). In its turn the nursery could benefit from an increase of support and as I described above active support from parents is likely to make the school a more natural focus for the local community (ibid, p.203). One of the most important benefits is the way a partnership can aid the educator's own teaching which brings us full circle to the transformative nature of the learning community in the sense that all its members, including its teachers, become learners:

Parents and professionals can help children separately or they can work together to the great benefit of the children. Parents can give practical help in classrooms (as many already do), but perhaps the greatest benefit to teachers in working with parents is the spur towards making their own pedagogy more conscious and explicit (Athey, 1990, p.66).

It is in the light of these ideas that, as part of my report to the educators, I considered it important to make recommendations regarding the active role of parents and the community in the life and work of the schools. It is to these recommendations that I now turn.

Recommendations Made to the Schools.

Recommendations for Parental Involvement.

As with my recommendations regarding cultural and language diversity I considered that aspects of parental and community involvement using the model of learning communities were dependent on a whole school approach. In this way I divided my recommendations between those practical steps suggested to Jenni which could be instituted by the nursery and those which I made to Chris and which involved school policy. I made the following recommendations to Jenni:

1. I suggested that the home visiting system used by the unit could be extended so that visits to families might be used to gain more specific information (see Appendix 11 for details of suggested questions). This could form a way of building a more extensive picture of the children and their families before they enter the nursery.
2. In connection with developing the possible involvement of parents in the unit I made a number of suggestions to Jenni including, as an initial step, the encouragement of new parents to use the school as a place to meet as a form of affinity group (Rennie, 1996, p.195) (see Appendix 11 for suggestions for this approach).

In response to my recommendations Jenni showed a particular interest in the idea of encouraging parents to use the school initially as a place to meet. We both agreed, however, that this was an initiative which would benefit from the support of Chris, as headteacher.

In response to my suggestion regarding the development of a whole school policy for parental involvement Chris reiterated her concerns about the level of intensification which she and the staff were experiencing at this time. However, she considered that the recommendations for the nursery unit could be implemented and that she would make space available in the school for Jenni's new parents to meet.

As a result of our discussions we agreed that I would send Chris a written copy of my detailed recommendations for policy in the areas of cultural and language diversity, and parental involvement (see Appendix 13).

As part of my report to Rosalind at Bridge I suggested that, as with other areas of my findings and recommendations, the work in which the school was currently involved as part of the Effective Early Learning project could be used as the basis for a review of policy and practice in relation to parental involvement. This review could lead to the formulation of an Action Plan for parental involvement which could become a priority in the School Development Plan. In relation to the review I recommended a number of possible strategies (see Appendix 12)

Rosalind's response to this section of the report included the following remarks:

- She considered that the idea of seeking parental involvement through affinity groups by means of the mothers' and toddlers' group was a good idea. She also agreed that it would be good for her and other members of staff as well as Sonia to be available. Rosalind liked the notion of the development of a learning community. The only difficulty she foresaw was that as a nursery they had a high turnover of children which made it difficult to establish long term parents and community groups within the school.
- Rosalind was very keen on establishing a home visiting system as a way of moving out into the community. She would like particularly to target new families and visit families in different roads. I suggested also that such a policy could be extended to all existing families in the school and would provide a way of visiting children in their home environment in order to build up a more extensive picture of the families.

In connection with my report as a whole and as a result of our discussions, we made the following decisions, related to my role as a governor of the school:

- a) Rosalind and myself were to meet during the following academic year in order to formulate an Action Plan for discussion within the staff and school arising from recommendations in my report.
- b) I would introduce an item on the agenda of a forthcoming governors' meeting in order to encourage governors to play an active role in encouraging parental and community involvement in the school.

Additional Considerations.

In considering the findings of the study and my recommendations there were a number of aspects of the work of the educators which could be borne in mind.

Resourcing.

An important consequence of any recommendations for development were the resourcing implications for the schools. In the case of Westside such decisions had to be taken in conjunction with the needs of the school as a whole and its delegated budget under the scheme for local management of schools. For example, in a subsequent conversation with Jenni regarding equipment for the nursery kitchen, she was aware of and accepted that despite Chris's sympathy for such resourcing, the money might not be available because of other school budget requirements. Bridge, on the other hand, although its funding was not delegated, was, nevertheless, subject to limitations of resourcing within its capitation allowance provided by the local education authority. In both cases the finances available for the initiatives suggested above would be limited and would depend on how important the schools were likely to consider the recommendations as they prepared priorities in their school development plans.

The pressures on educators' time.

I discussed in Chapter 5 how the experience by teachers of intensification had led to a colonisation of their time, resulting, in its turn, in feelings of deprofessionalisation. It becomes necessary, therefore, to place any recommendations for school improvement

in the context of the resultant constraints on teachers' capacities to carry out their roles. In the first instance, these constraints were seen to arise from the pressures on educators to fulfil statutory requirements, exemplified by the demands placed on the pedagogy of the nursery at Westside to prepare children for becoming pupils in the context of the National Curriculum before their move to the school's reception class. The sense of pressure in this regard was apparent even despite Jenni's embracement of a more formalised methodology in the unit. Secondly, the colonisation of teachers' time created the need for a more rigid prioritising of teacher led initiatives. This was exemplified by Chris's response to some of the whole school policy developments which I had suggested. Therefore, it is important to place the recommendations I made in the context of the extent to which they would require teachers to perform additional work. In one sense any drive for school improvement includes additional work, whether in terms of the necessity for planning and execution or in evaluation and consequent development. However, despite my desire to minimise this, my recommendations were made in the knowledge that there may have been a need for some additional work on the part of the educators if they were to be fulfilled. With this in mind, therefore, there could be a need for the schools to establish which issues they considered most pressing and develop action plans accordingly. In the case of Westside this needed to be placed against the particular priorities which in a sense had been set for the school by outside demands including the existing commitments to the National Curriculum.

The development of educators as professionals.

During the course of my examination of the educators' pedagogies I emphasised the fact that despite the experience of intensification the educators were finding strategies for reasserting their roles as professionals. However, in my suggestion, firstly, that there was a need for educators to address the issue of cultural and language diversity in their schools and, secondly, my examination of the transformative potential of the development of learning communities, I presented what could be viewed as a challenge

to that sense of professional knowledge and expertise which educators possess, despite the experience of intensification. In my discussion of parental involvement, in particular, this sense of challenge could be construed as being especially strong, questioning, in its turn, the educators' roles and particular expertise and as such their professional positions. The way in which these relationships between educators and others were developed would depend on the individual assessments made by Rosalind, Jenni and Chris as to how in the process the educators were able to retain a sense of ownership of and purpose in their professional roles. Educators do possess distinct educational knowledge and expertise which has a central role to play in child education. These roles need to be asserted but within the context of the ways in which the knowledge and understanding of parents, their communities and other professionals are able to extend that knowledge and give teachers means to fulfil their professional roles in a comprehensive and informed way.

My Personal Gains as a Result of the Research.

The study of the two schools provided me with particular opportunities as a researcher to gain important insights into a number of aspects of the work of the schools and their communities. In the first instance, within the limitations of my cultural understanding and experience, the interviews with the parents provided me with an appreciation of Asian communities and their experiences of engaging with the educational system. With clarity and a sharpness of perception they, especially the mothers, delineated the tensions which are unique to those communities engaging with the educational system on the basis of their ethnicity. This was exemplified by those parents who drew a comparison between their recognition, and indeed their aspirational desire, to engage fully with the educational cultures of their children's schools and their corresponding desire to assert the way in which their own cultures represented a personal identity without which "we'll be deprived of everything" as one mother remarked. My interviews with the parents also gave me an insight into the extensive means by which parents played an active role in the education of their children at home. In this way my

findings endorsed those of previous researches (for example Tizard and Hughes, 1984; Wells, 1987) but within the specific context of Asian communities. These findings represented also a recognition of the fact that for those communities their children's "prior knowledge" (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p.118) represented both cultural and life skills.

My interviews with the educators and my observations in the classrooms provided me with a number of important insights into the development of educators' ideas of the educational process and the nature of their application, especially in relation to models of early years practice as they affect bilingual learners. In the case of the interviews with educators my use of an ethnographic approach to the research provided me with opportunities to explore at length the sources of the educators' educational philosophies and the nature of their developed beliefs. For example, the educators' descriptions of their social and familial backgrounds and their descriptions of their professional development provided me with a rounded picture of the sources of their ideas which established their "selves" as well as, in their turn, the reasons why these educational ideas took their particular forms. For example, it was evident from my interviews with Chris that the basis of her concern for a child-centred approach to children's development and her concerns for her staff's welfare lay in her own familial relationships as a child herself and with her own children. The interviews also provided me with instances of "critical events" (Woods, 1993) which helped to shape the development of educators' professional views, as for example, in Rosalind's attendance at an early years course at Moray House in Edinburgh which shaped and gave a sharp delineation to her future ideas of early years theory and practice.

By means of my observations of children at play I was able to develop an understanding of the kinds of skills which children develop and how the nature of the physical provision affected its relevance for the experiences of bilingual children. For example, the generally culture specific nature of the environment in both settings created significant limitations to the children's opportunities to use their prior knowledge

effectively to develop skills and understanding as exemplified in cooking activities and the house. These observations also enabled me to understand the importance of collaborative teaching and learning and, as evidenced also by the interviews with the parents, how the almost exclusive use of English as the language of teaching was adversely affecting the balance between cultures in the schools. In this way the research and its methodologies led to a greater understanding on my part of the important relationships which need to exist between pedagogical ideas and their practices on the one side and the development of cultural understanding and appreciation between educators, children, their parents and communities on the other.

The Educators' Views of the Research.

My report of the research findings and resultant recommendations to the educators in the settings enabled them to respond to the research in general and to comment on my suggestions for school development. Their immediate comments have already been noted in the section detailing the recommendations made to the schools. In addition, I asked Rosalind, Jenni and Chris questions regarding the research as a whole, including their opinions of its usefulness, conduct, including the form and nature of the sharing with the schools of my findings and recommendations, and its potential for further studies.

In relation to the research as a whole both Chris and Rosalind were happy with its conduct and findings in the sense that as Rosalind remarked, the findings represented what she considered to be an accurate analysis of her school, its policies and practice, for example, in my assessment of the need for greater collaborative teaching and learning in the context of bilingual learners. She also found interesting the relationship between play and its particular relevance for bilingual children. Chris in her turn had found the research helpful and she would be happy for the school to be used again as a basis for further studies. Jenni very much liked having another teacher working with her whom she could use as a sounding board and who could provide her with another perspective on things. She also found that I was able to obtain information about the

children and their cultural backgrounds which she was not able to acquire because of her workload. Again, Chris and Rosalind had found the form of the report helpful in the way it gave opportunities for discussion of recommendations as they arose. Jenni had particularly liked the "personal touch" provided by the initial oral report. Both Rosalind and Jenni also appreciated subsequently being provided with the report in a written form as it enabled them to revisit analysis and recommendations made in the verbal feedback. Rosalind found the recommendations particularly relevant to the work of the nursery as she considered that being placed under the three headings would enable the school to integrate them into the School Development Plan with comparative ease. Jenni felt the findings of the research were useful and had highlighted aspects of potential practice which she had not noticed before or which she knew in her "sub-conscious" but needed to be reminded of them in order to make them explicit. For example, she had found the recommendations I had made on what she termed "intervention" in children's play particularly useful. Since then she had consciously thought about occasions when she could join children and talk with them or ask them questions, or as she described it: "Now I do find myself thinking should I intervene and guide them to experiment?" Both Chris and Rosalind welcomed the idea of further research in their schools. Chris was particularly interested in the educational effect of children's extended absences from school as a result of visits to relatives abroad, for example, what would the children's loss of attainment be and what sort of support should they be given to "catch up" with their peers academically? Chris considered that these visits to relatives were an important part of the children's familial and cultural experiences which she would continue to support, but she did consider that the children did miss a considerable amount of school experience at these times. Rosalind would appreciate further research into bilingual children and their relationship culturally and linguistically with the nursery curriculum, because she still felt she wanted to develop her understanding of the issue. In addition she would also like some research into parents in the nursery with particular regard to parental expectations when children start school. She suggested that this could form part of a process of finding ways of

developing parental perceptions of early years practice. I suggested that this could form the basis for an exploration of the potential of learning communities, an idea with which she agreed. Jenni, in her turn, was interested in research into when bilingual children begin to recognise the differences between their community languages and English in relation to their appropriate uses.

Out of the autonomy which Rosalind felt regarding her own school arose an enthusiastic embracement of the ideas for development which we had discussed. This arose from the fact that the lesser degree of intensification enabled her to be able to view the development of policy and practice in her school as a whole, in contrast to Chris, whose experience was that of being forced to be reactive to the external demands being made on the coherence and momentum of her school. Therefore, there was a need, in the case of Westside, for a particularly gradual approach to developments on a whole school basis. However, so far as the nursery unit was concerned there was the potential for implementing some of the practical initiatives contained in the recommendations, initiatives which, despite Chris's reservations regarding whole school policy she committed herself to support. The other issue of importance regarding my role in the research was my offer to Rosalind and Jenni to give practical support to developments arising from my recommendations. As a governor and researcher at Bridge the potential for my participation in the development of change arose naturally from my association with the setting. In the case of Westside this role was open, potentially, to doubt, involving as it did a commitment and sense of personal identification which moved beyond the accepted definition of the researcher. However, there are other factors which nevertheless made this type of participation possible. In the first instance, as I was personally known by Chris and other members of staff I would be viewed as acting as a friend of the school. In addition, I was in a position whereby I would be able to spend some time at the school, unlike the normal researcher who has alternative responsibilities. In this way I was able to move outside my role as a researcher to embrace the opportunity to find practical solutions to the development of relevant experiences for bilingual children in the settings.

This study of educators, children and their parents in the two nursery settings has examined the extent to which the schools established a relevant curriculum and environment for their bilingual learners. Through the medium of the views of the parents and educators and the observations in the classrooms a picture emerged of a curriculum in each setting which, although benefiting from attempts by educators to embrace the concept of multi-culturalism, nevertheless failed to give full expression to the knowledge and experiences represented by the diversity of children's cultures and languages within the settings. This resulted in insufficient credibility and status being given to those cultures and languages in the life and work of the schools. It also emphasised the opportunities which still awaited the nurseries to engage with the development of an understanding of and commitment to the ways in which their pedagogies and practices could benefit from an embracement of the skills and knowledge provided by their bilingual learners and their families and communities.

APPENDIX 1

CHILDREN AND PARENTS STUDIED IN THE RESEARCH.

Name of Parents	Born and Educated	Community languages spoken at home	Name of Child	Date of Birth	Position in Family*	Date of Entry to Nursery
Bridge Nursery School						
Mrs Thapar (Gita) Mr Thapar	England England	Panjabi Panjabi	Aditya	13.12.91	2 of 2	12.1.95
Mrs Jain Mr Jain	England England	Panjabi Panjabi	Naveen	9.5.92	1 of 2	11.5.95
Mrs Khan (Balkis) Mr Khan	England Pakistan	Urdu Urdu	Aisha	13.1.92	3 of 4	24.1.95
Mrs Shankar (Reena) Mr Shankar	England England	Panjabi Panjabi	Sonny	7.12.90	1 of 2	15.9.94
Mrs Mitra (Aleena) Mr Mitra	England England	Panjabi Panjabi	Amar	5.12.90	3 of 3	12.9.94
Westside Nursery Unit						
Mrs Ali Mr Ali	Pakistan England	Urdu, Panjabi Panjabi	Iqbal	6.10.91	2 of 2	3.5.95
Mrs Sarwar Mr Sarwar	Pakistan England	Urdu Urdu, Panjabi	Jabidul	7.3.92	1 of 1	23.4.96
Mrs Islam Mr Islam	Bangladesh Bangladesh	Bengali Bengali	Attia	2.1.92	3 of 3	16.5.95
Mrs Hussein Mr Hussein	Pakistan/ England Pakistan	Panjabi Panjabi	Tariq	10.9.91	3 of 3	5.2.96
Mrs Dhariwal Mr Dhariwal	Pakistan Pakistan	Panjabi	Zeeshad	3.1.92	7 of 7	17.5.95
Mrs Ali Mr Ali	Pakistan Pakistan	Urdu Urdu	Irfan	2.2.92	5 of 6	7.2.96
Mrs Mousaf Mr Mousaf	England Bangladesh	Bengali	Rushan	1.12.90	1 of 1	12.9.94

* For example: 2 of 3 means the child is the second oldest of three children in the family.

APPENDIX 2

PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHIES OF THE EDUCATORS FORMING THE SUBJECTS OF THE STUDY.

Chris had been Headteacher of Westside Lower School since 1990, it being her first headship. She was born and educated in the town where she has spent her teaching career. Her experience has been mainly in schools with high proportions of bilingual children including one school in an Educational Priority Area in the town. After some experience as a Deputy Headteacher of a Lower School on the outskirts of the town she moved to her present job.

Rosalind was born and brought up in Scotland. She was appointed as Headteacher of Bridge Nursery School from a post as nursery co-ordinator in another local authority in 1989. She had had a wide experience of early years education in both Scotland and England and her headship was her second job specifically within the nursery phase. While teaching a reception class in Suffolk she took her MA at the Institute of Education in London.

Jenni was the co-ordinator of the nursery unit at Westside Lower School. Originally she trained as a nursery nurse taking an NNEB course after leaving a Grammar School in a nearby town at the age of sixteen. She worked as a nursery nurse for a year and then went to teachers' training college and qualified as a teacher working initially in another town in the county. Eventually she applied for and obtained a permanent post at the school under the previous Headteacher. In 1992 Jenni moved from the main school to become co-ordinator of the nursery unit where she has been since.

After starting and then giving up training to be a nurse at a London hospital Kate, the Deputy Headteacher at Bridge Nursery School, obtained a B.Ed degree after deciding that she would prefer working with children. Her first job was as an infant teacher.

After having her two children she then worked in a number of part-time jobs. After some supply teaching and a job in charge of a new nursery in a local town she moved to Bridge Nursery school as Deputy Headteacher in 1995.

Anne, who worked as a nursery nurse with Jenni at Westside Lower School, qualified as a nursery nurse in 1988 after studying for an NNEB qualification and became a nanny for a year. She applied for the school because while she was training she had a placement at a school in the town which had a high proportion of bilingual pupils. She found the Asian parents very friendly and this had encouraged her to apply for a similar school.

Linda, who also worked as a nursery nurse with Jenni and Anne at Westside Lower School, was on the same NNEB course as Anne and qualified at the same time. Like Anne she worked as a nanny at first before working in private nurseries in the town. She moved to the nursery unit at Westside Lower School in November 1995.

Nadia was the bilingual part-time Section 11 nursery nurse working each afternoon in the nursery unit at Westside Lower School. Her first language was Panjabi. She was born and educated in this country and trained at a local college, taking a BTEC in nursery nursing. After qualifying she went to Pakistan to marry, returning shortly afterwards to this country with her husband. After having a child she returned to work obtaining her present post at Westside. She lives locally with her husband and family.

APPENDIX 3

FRAMEWORK FOR INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS.

A. ABOUT FAMILY.

1. Who family consists of, e.g. how many children?
Do any other family members live with you?
2. Languages you use at home?
Who uses them?
3. Religion?
4. Were you born in this country?
If not, where?
If not how long have you lived here?
How long have you lived in the town?
Where did you live before you came to the town?
5. Do you have the opportunity to meet with other members of the community,
friends, relatives?

B. CULTURE & LANGUAGE IN THE FAMILY.

1. Who speaks community language(s) at home?
2. Who tends to talk to child and in which language?
3. How do you feel about maintaining your own language, religion and culture in
English society?
Why?

C. THE CHILD AT SCHOOL.

1. What would you like your child to achieve in life?
2. Are you looking forward to your child starting at nursery?
Why? Why not?
3. Is your child looking forward to starting nursery?
Has she/he said why? or why not?
4. Have you visited the school?
What did you think of it?
5. Do you know what your child is likely to be doing at nursery?
6. Would you like your child to have the opportunity of talking in her/his first
language and to learn about her/his culture?
7. What sort of things would you like your child to be doing at nursery?
What do you think are the most important things for your child to learn?

D. CHILD AT HOME

- 1. What sort of things does your child like doing at home? (playing, going out, etc.)**
- 2. Does your child enjoy things like TV, games, stories, drawing, videos?**
- 3. Do you try to teach your child anything?**
- 4. Do you tell/read stories to your child?**
If so what stories and in what language?
- 5. Do you make a point of talking to your child?**
What about?
In what language?
Can your child speak English?
How well compared with first language?
- 6. Does your child ever play with other children?**
Who?
- 7. Do you take your child out?**
Where?

ANY QUESTIONS YOU WOULD LIKE TO ASK ME?

APPENDIX 4

FRAMEWORK FOR SECOND INTERVIEW WITH REPRESENTATIVE GROUP OF PARENTS.

A. GENERAL DEVELOPMENT.

How do you feel your child has settled down at school?

How is she at home now?

Have her interests changed at all? What does she like doing at home now?

Has her relationship with her brother/sister changed at all?

Has her relationship with you changed at all?

Do you think her level of concentration has changed at all?

B. LANGUAGE

Have you noticed any differences language wise since she started school?
For example: has her English improved? Is she speaking more English at home? What about her Panjabi/Urdu?

Have you altered the pattern of what languages you use with her at home?
How does she respond?

What sort of things do you do with her at home now? Stories - what sort?
Writing?

What do you think of the provision for children speaking their community languages at school?

C. DEVELOPMENT AT SCHOOL.

Of what you have seen of the school now what do you think of the provision for children's cultures?

Would you like her to be doing different things at school?

Is there anything else that you would like to see the school doing for her?

APPENDIX 5

FRAMEWORK FOR INTERVIEWS WITH EDUCATORS.

A. PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Where were you born and brought up?

Tell me about your family when you were a child.

Did you have any sisters or brothers? Are they teachers or nursery nurses?

Where did you go to school? Did you enjoy it?

What were your personal interests as a child? Did you always want to be an educator?

Tell me about your present family. Partner? Children?

B. PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Why did you decide to become a teacher?

Why did you choose this particular phase and age range?

Tell me about your training.

What did you think of your training? Do you feel it prepared you for life in the classroom?

Tell me about your jobs up to coming to this school.

What do you think you gained from those jobs?

C. STARTING WORK AT THE SCHOOL.

Given your previous experience what was it about the school that appealed to you that made you feel you wanted to work here?

Tell me what you have been doing during your time at the school.

It was your first headship/deputy headship/co-ordinator/nursery nurse job. What particular problems did you have to face when you first started?

Do you think you have been able to overcome them? If so why? If not, why not?

What opportunities have you had to develop yourself since starting your post here?

D. YOUR JOB.

How do you see your job as being able to fulfil what you view as important to you in a school such as this?

What things do you like about your job? What things don't you like?

Do you like being a member of the management? Why? Why not?

Do you like working as part of a team? Why? Why not?

F. YOUR IDEAS.

What is your view of the way children learn in the early years?

Do you think these methods have relevance for the way children are taught in a later age phase?

How would you like the nursery to be developing over the next period?

How do you feel about the children speaking their community languages? Do you think it should be encouraged? If so why and how? If not why not?

Do you think there is a place for taking a full account of the children's cultural backgrounds when planning the work of the nursery?

How do you think questions of culture should be reflected in the school's provision?

How do you think policy should be developed to embrace diversity?

What role do you think parents have to play in the school?

In what ways have your ideas changed or developed since you started teaching?

F. YOUR OWN CAREER.

How would you like your career to develop?

APPENDIX 6

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS.

ANALYSIS 1

Familiarisation with interview carried out - general themes discussed, factual information.

ANALYSIS 2

Noting of specific factual information, for example, members of family, community languages spoken.

ANALYSIS 3

Noting of answers to specific questions in interview framework.

Initial analysis of themes regarding culture and language.

Transcription of whole or part of tape.

ANALYSIS 4

Further analysis of themes.

Comparison with other parent interviews.

ANALYSIS 5

Comparison of themes identified with:

1. educator interviews
2. observations of children in school
3. comparison with second parent interviews.

ANALYSIS 6

Final checking of themes with alternative interviews and observations as data collection completed.

APPENDIX 7

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS WITH EDUCATORS.

Phase 1

ANALYSIS 1

Familiarisation with interview carried out - general themes discussed, factual information.

ANALYSIS 2

Noting of particular information, for example, personal and professional background.

ANALYSIS 3

Initial identification of themes regarding professional views.

Transcription of whole or part of tape.

ANALYSIS 4

Further analysis of themes.

Comparison with other educators' views.

Phase 2

ANALYSIS 5

Analysis 1-4 carried out for additional interviews.

Comparison of views of educators with:

1. views of parents
2. observations of children and educators in school
3. examination of written policies.

ANALYSIS 6

As interviews and observations completed, final analysis of views and comparison with practice.

APPENDIX 8

NAME: DATE: TIME:	COMMENTS	SITUATION: EQUIPMENT: PEOPLE:
<u>NON-VERBAL</u>		<u>VERBAL</u>

APPENDIX 9

NAME		DATE	
CHILDREN			
CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY			
INTERACTION			
<u>First Approaches</u>			
<u>Development</u>			
<u>Conclusion</u>			
LANGUAGES			
NOTES			

APPENDIX 10

The twelve features of free-flow play

Source: Time to Play in Early Childhood Education by Tina Bruce (1991).

Feature 1: It is an active process without a product.

Feature 2: It is intrinsically motivated.

Feature 3: It exerts no external pressure to conform to rules, pressures, goals, tasks or definite direction.

Feature 4: It is about possible, alternative worlds, which involve 'supposing' and 'as if' (Atkin 1985-8), which lift players to their highest levels of functioning. This involves being imaginative, creative, original and innovative.

Feature 5: It is about participants wallowing in ideas, feelings and relationships. It involves reflecting on, and becoming aware of, what we know - or metacognition.

Feature 6: It actively uses previous first-hand experiences, including struggle, manipulation, exploration, discovery and practice.

Feature 7: It is sustained, and when in full flow, helps us to function in advance of what we can actually do in our real lives.

Feature 8: During free-flow play, we use the technical prowess, mastery and competence we have previously developed, and so can be in control.

Feature 9: It can be initiated by a child or an adult, but if by an adult he/she must pay particular attention to 3, 5 and 11 above.

Feature 10: It can be solitary.

Feature 11: It can be in partnerships or groups, adults and/or children who who will be sensitive to each other.

Feature 12: It is an integrating mechanism, which brings together everything we learn, know, feel and understand.

APPENDIX 11

RESEARCH REPORT BACK TO JENNI AT WESTSIDE LOWER SCHOOL.

These are just ideas and you will know if they are feasible or not.

Early Years Policy and Practice.

Aspects of planning and practice noted during the research.

- Positive support for children and a happy atmosphere, children are happy to come to school and their relationships with each other are excellent.
- Children are developing some impressive skills.
- Really good working relationship between Jenni, Anne, Linda and Nadia and I have been made to feel very welcome.
- Children encouraged to use available equipment to the full.
- Profiling is thorough and gives a positive picture of each child.
- Record keeping of observations of structured activities thorough.

Suggestions arising from research and actions agreed at the verbal report back

- I. Have you thought of extending your regular formal observations to the children's free play as well as structured activities?:
 - A. Looking at children's play might enable you to plan for the provision you put out, e.g. a child might be particularly interested in something and want to carry on with it the next day.
 - B. Observing the children's play might give more opportunities for you to focus on joining them and talking with them for particular purposes.
- II. Nick to discuss with Chris resourcing for new equipment in kitchen suitable for children to use.

Cultural and Language Diversity.

Aspects of planning and practice noted during the research.

- Children feel free to use their community languages.

- They have Nadia there if they want to speak in Panjabi.
- Nadia taking groups for stories in Panjabi very useful and gives children confidence in using their community languages.
- The festivals you celebrate, e.g. Diwali and Eid, really well attended.
- I think the way you try and have some labels in community languages and some artefacts around helps to give a positive view of culture in the unit.
- Your home visiting policy is creating a link with the families which is important for them as well as you.

Suggestions arising from research.

1. Have you thought of using Nadia as a resource for using Panjabi with children in a focused way, e.g. cooking, leading afternoon sessions with Panjabi rhymes and songs, doing story tapes for the listening corner?
2. Do you know any words in community languages? For instance greetings and yes, no, please? Would the children be able to tell you and teach you?
3. You have a lovely selection of books and you have got the children really interested in using them. It is very impressive the way the children naturally gravitate to the books and "read" them and share them together. Do you know any more books which are about Asian children and/or in dual languages?

Parental Involvement.

Aspects of planning and practice noted during the research.

- I think your home visiting policy is really important and builds an important link with the families as well as the children.

Possible source of development.

Have you thought of using it as an opportunity to get some more specific information from the parents about their child in addition to the entry form? For instance:

- ⇒ What the child likes to do at home.
- ⇒ How the parents help the child at home.
- ⇒ Do sisters and brothers help?

This could form part of the initial visit and the information gained would give you a clear picture of the child and her knowledge as she starts.

Other planning and practice noted.

- You have an excellent relationship with your parents and the parents I have met appreciate your open door policy into the unit.
- You also give parents the chance to stay with their children when they begin which helps them as well as the child.
- The parents are obviously made to feel very welcome when they come in to celebrate festivals and you give them a lot of individual support.

Suggestion arising from the support you already give parents.

Have you thought of extending your welcome to parents, starting perhaps with your new parents by:

- ⇒ Inviting them to meet regularly in the office in the unit or perhaps in the visitors part of the main school to have a chat?
- ⇒ Setting up a place for them to meet regularly as a parents' room or does the visitors' part serve this purpose?
- ⇒ Could Nadia help to set this up?
- ⇒ Would you be available to pop in and have a chat occasionally?

You could use such a group to get the nursery message across and to begin to identify parents whom you might want to invite to help in the unit.

In a sense this is also a whole school concern and you might need some help from Chris with this if you felt it was worth pursuing.

If you think any of these ideas are worth following up I would be happy to give you a hand - good luck!

APPENDIX 12

RESEARCH REPORT BACK TO ROSALIND AT BRIDGE NURSERY SCHOOL.

Early Years Policy and Practice.

Aspects of planning and practice noted during the research.

- Excellent quality of physical provision - variety, consistent potential as developmental tool.
- Development of skills through interest - each activity potential for covering wide range of Desirable Learning Outcomes, e.g. woodwork: Language and Literacy; Mathematics; Knowledge and Understanding of the World; Physical Development; Creative Development.
- Consistent observational techniques being used to plan for individual children.
- Encouragement of self-resourcing which contributes to development of personal responsibility and ownership.

Areas of Possible Development.

1. Quality interaction between educators and children providing for balance between free-flow play and developmental collaboration with adults ("teachable moments", "observe, support and extend play", "adults and children developing play together").
2. Consistent observation of way children use language together and with adults.
3. Systematic planning for progression in individual children.

Recommendations.

1. Using EEL framework on "Adult Engagement", investigate nature and quality of adult/child interaction in relation to play in the curriculum:
 - a) Use Rosalind's own expertise in this area.
 - b) Examples on EEL video tape.
 - c) Collaborative work amongst staff to explore possibilities and techniques in this field, e.g. conversations, instructions, questions connected with "scaffolding" and helping children in "struggle" (Bruce, 1987).
 - d) A period of experimentation could then take place in which staff could record opportunities which they had taken to interact with children, either on their own or with a partner observing. They could then as a staff examine these interactions and discuss and assess their quality. In this way over a period of time the staff would build up a knowledge of what might constitute examples of quality interaction.

- e) This could be an item on the EEL Action Plan and could be prioritised in the School Development Plan.
2. Using work on Leuven scale of child involvement in EEL project record children's opportunities for interactions with each other, including community languages.
3. Rosalind could use Evaluation and Action Plan stages of EEL project to begin to disseminate her philosophy to the staff on a systematic whole staff basis.

Cultural and Language Diversity.

Aspects of planning and practice noted during the research.

Number of initiatives already in place:

- Mothers' and toddlers' group.
- Panjabi stories told by Sonia.
- Bengali tapes.
- Festivals, curry lunch.
- Artefacts, dressing-up clothes, some books.

Areas of Possible Development.

1. Development of knowledge by educators of children's and families' cultures and languages.
2. Increased opportunities for children to interact with adults in English or in their community languages as part of making shared experience meaningful and relevant for bilingual learners.
3. Further development of culture and language within the curriculum planning and assessment.

Recommendations.

- a) Using EEL interview framework (staff, governors, parents, ancillary staff) + staff discussions, begin process of reviewing multi-cultural and equal opportunities policies within school. Consultation with parents and community could begin by utilising mothers' and toddlers' group and parent governors. Possibly develop over a period of time the concept of multi-culturalism combined with an anti-racist element as suggested by May (1994).
- b) Developing Sonia's role: translator, working with other educators, organising group activities with other educators, e.g. cooking, but taking a leading role in order to give her status as a Panjabi speaker.
- c) Encouraging monolingual educators not only to learn a few words and phrases in community languages but to draw on children's skills by asking them about their

community languages, e.g. asking them words they would use to describe certain objects, (helps all bilingual children, whatever age, to feel at home and be more willing to engage with the culture of the nursery).

- d) Looking for ways of using members of community and parents to work with children and use stories (see affinity groups below for idea of introducing this).
- e) Review of resourcing: books, activities, songs, tapes. Use Sonia as adviser on artefacts, etc..

Parental and Community Involvement.

Aspects of planning and practice noted during the research.

- School viewed as a source of support by mothers: for their children, for themselves. Therefore, there is a substantial body of goodwill towards school.
- Sources of contact with parents: personal contact with Rosalind; mothers' and toddlers' group, festivals, curry lunch.
- Parents (interviewed) also play active role with their children at home: children's interests + more formal activities connected with their own educational experiences. Therefore, they are guardians of much knowledge about and understanding of their children. Therefore, a major resource for the school.

Areas of Possible Development.

1. Systematic educational contact between home and school. Parents interviewed did not always understand methodology used in nursery, e.g. they based their work with their children at home on their own educational experiences.
2. More contact with community.
3. Regular and systematic involvement of parents and other members of community.

Recommendations.

As part of EEL project review present forms of access to the school by parents and community, leading to Action Plan. This plan could be one of the priorities in the School Development Plan. Possible lines of action could be:

1. Examine mothers' and toddlers' group + school events to see how these could be extended, e.g. affinity groups starting with new parents - this could be organised by already active parents in M and T group.
2. As part of this development Rosalind, Sonia and other members of staff could be available to talk with parents and exchange information which could in its turn provide a way into beginning the process of establishing lines of communication related to the development of a "learning community" (Cocklin, 1996).
3. Development of a home visiting policy: initial pre-school visits + visits on a regular basis.
4. Involve governors, including parent governors.

5. Part of review would be the need to think about the availability of different parents, e.g. working mothers and fathers + willingness, e.g. unconfident parents.

Future Action.

- Nick to open item on the agenda of a future governors' meeting regarding encouraging governors to play an active part in encouraging parental and community involvement in the school.
- Rosalind and Nick to meet during next academic year to formulate in detail Action Plans for each section of the report back. Three meetings needed for this.

APPENDIX 13

IDEAS FOR FUTURE WHOLE SCHOOL POLICY REVIEW. **WESTSIDE LOWER SCHOOL.**

Cultural and Language Diversity.

The suggestions I have made to Jenni could be related to whole school policy.

I wonder if the following suggestions could be considered as part of looking for strategies to get provision for bilingual children centrally placed within the curriculum:

1. A systematic approach to staff discussions with a view to exploring and developing teachers' views and attitudes as well as an examination of the ways in which provision for cultural diversity could be represented at the core of the curriculum. For example, these discussions could begin with a review of present practice built around a number of staff sessions looking at teachers' feelings towards provision for cultural diversity in the school. Because of the sensitivity of this issue and the possible reluctance of teachers to express their opinions openly, thought could be given as to how these discussions are to be structured. A preferred strategy may be that a member of the county equal opportunities team or whoever you feel appropriate is invited to use her or his experience to work with teachers using a method of involvement that is not threatening to the participants. Whoever is invited to lead such discussions, it may be important that it should be someone from outside the school who is skilled in such procedures. The review could also examine the opportunities for the encouragement of community languages within the school. Strategies to aid the use could be, for example:
 - a) More conscious and systematic use of community languages by bilingual teaching assistants in teaching situations.
 - b) Bilingual teaching assistants working alongside monolingual teachers in some activities and sometimes taking the lead and encouraging the use of community languages by the children as teaching and learning strategies during the sessions.
 - c) Encouraging monolingual teachers to learn a few words and phrases in community languages to use with the children, as well as encouraging the children to teach them words and phrases.
2. The review might also examine what kind of policy is needed in the school. Is it purely a revised policy encouraging awareness of multi-culturalism, an equal opportunities policy or are there possibilities for the beginning of a discussion on an anti-racist policy?
3. The issue of the National Curriculum arises also. Are there ways in which curriculum discussions could take place with the staff with a view to finding strategies for making the National Curriculum work more relevant to the bilingual learners?

Parental and Community Involvement.

You might find the following ideas of some use in addition to those I suggested to Jenni and which could include a whole school approach to the issue:

1. Review of existing policy on parental involvement. This review could examine the possibilities provided by the ideas of a mutually beneficial partnership. I have some information on recent ideas about the development of "learning communities" which I could share with you.
2. The review could include an extension into the school of an affinity group similar to my suggestion for the nursery. This group could be new parents at first and they could use their meetings as a means of mutual support and exchange of information. The idea could be developed over a period of time to encourage parents taking part in the group to move further into the school and become more active.
3. You do a lot of home visiting. Are there any other members of staff who would be interested - could it be part of the Section XI teachers' role?
4. The idea of developing links with the local community could be introduced to the governing body and their support sought, e.g. parent governors.

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